

THE POWER OF WORDS

Studies on Charms and
Charming in Europe



*Edited by James Kapaló,
Éva Pócs and William Ryan*

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and Charming in Europe*

Edited by

JAMES KAPALÓ, ÉVA PÓCS
and WILLIAM RYAN



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INTRODUCTION

This book of essays is the third in a series of books published as part of the on-going international cooperation of members of the *Committee for Charms, Charmers and Charming* established six years ago as a part of the *International Society for Folk Narrative Research* (ISFNR).¹ Joint research had in fact begun earlier, in 2003, and continued in 2005 in the form of conferences held at the Warburg Institute of the University of London and organised jointly with the Folklore Society. The cooperation that developed in this way culminated in 2007 in the conference held in Hungary at the Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of Pécs University, sponsored also by the Folklore Society. British, Russian, Estonian and Hungarian participants now contributed as members of the Committee and discussed necessary further steps. The scope of the Committee is constantly increasing – after conventions in Pécs, Tartu, Athens, Bucharest and Moscow now the eighth international conference is being planned for Vilnius in 2013 by researchers from over 20 countries. The Committee's periodical, in both print and online open-access format, has also been launched under the title *Incantatio* with its editorial board based in Tartu.

As the present volume reflects, researchers of charms include representatives of European ethnology and folklore studies, and contemporary and historical anthropology, as well as linguistics, the study of Classical Antiquity, medieval studies, Byzantine studies, Russian

¹ See the first two volumes: Roper 2004; Roper 2009.

studies and Baltic studies. One reason for this is that we do not consider charms as existing only in the oral tradition, even if one might be tempted to do so by some experiences in areas of Europe where folklore tradition is still active. It is well known that in medieval and early modern Europe charms were still a living practice in all strata of society. It is important to study manuscript and printed relics of written culture, the rich medieval textual tradition of archives, monasteries and literary sources, and the texts amassed in the folklore archives of Europe or those still accessible through fieldwork in many rural areas of Eastern and Southern Europe and known from the living practice of lay specialists of magic and healers in local communities, and even of priests.

Our research is not restricted to the narrow generic frames of *the charm*. Even if we take charms in the narrowest sense, questions regarding all their literary and orally transmitted sub-categories, their types, linguistic devices, functions and historical changes cannot be answered without a complex examination of all utterances of verbal magic, whether it be *church benedictions*, *ritual curses*, *apocryphal prayers*, *spells* from *folktales* or *divination texts*. Charms are fundamentally a *functional genre*, which cannot be demarcated by criteria of content or form from other categories of verbal magic or even from “religious” prayers—the latter of course, despite the complex relationship between magic and prayer touched on below, cannot strictly be considered a form of magic. The role of charm may be played by any text that has traditionally been used for this purpose as a means of magical influence, regardless of criteria of form or content. Besides, it seems that genres of verbal magic are so intertwined in the whole of Christian Europe, in terms of both content and form, with religious genres such as blessings, curses and prayers that it is impossible to determine where Christian practice ends and lay magic begins. This becomes clear even from the way in which European terms of charm-blessing-curse-prayer complement, merge with or substitute for each other.

The need for international and interdisciplinary cooperation is also demonstrated by a number of other important factors. Since they belong to a special textual genre, which tends to be transmitted with considerable verbal accuracy through long periods of time, most charms have survived a number of linguistic and religious changes and thus conserved a great amount of other very old

traditions such as narratives and knowledge about deities, saints and demons, archaic poetical forms or other stylistic or poetic phenomena. Besides, the distinctly pan-European character of this genre is also clear to researchers. This genre displays common characteristics among several peoples, languages and religions of Europe, while certain sub-types are familiar throughout the whole or the majority of Christian Europe. In this regard we do not need so much to consider the result of the globalisation processes taking place under our very eyes in European culture—it is more important to bear in mind that European charms have already undergone a number of major globalisation processes throughout the two millennia of their known history. During the centuries of the Hellenistic period the high cultures of the Ancient Orient became integrated with Greco-Roman culture; the processes of Christianisation further integrated and unified all of these, as well as various local religions and cultures; in this same context clerical Latin and Greek had a linguistic unifying effect, while Christianity also had its own clerical practice of charms manifesting itself in priests offering healing, blessing and exorcism, or in the activity of monks. The majority of charms surviving in lay and folk practice also come from a clerical context: it was medieval Latin written culture that spread them across the whole of Europe. Thus the majority of this rich textual corpus has a great many textual motifs that are related to each other throughout Europe. This is coloured further in all cases by texts and motifs originating in the oral transmission processes of local folklore. If, in a Europe so rapidly heading down the road of globalisation, establishing international networks for researching topics of religious anthropology and folklore is an important endeavour, then in the case of this even more clearly “global” European genre this is particularly the case.

Ever since the outset of research on this subject, one of the most exciting questions has been the co-existence and mutual impact of a general, shared European wealth of traditions and local heritage (for example, linguistic or national characteristics based on the legacy of pre-Christian religions and local folk traditions). This was actually the focus of early twentieth-century geographical-historical comparative studies, many of which put special stress on questions of origin or perhaps even looked for original or primal texts (see, for example, Krohn 1901; Ebermann 1903; Pradel 1907; Mansikka 1909; Hästesko

1914; Christiansen 1914; Krohn 1924; Ohrt 1936; Ohrt 1938); this was also the objective driving initiatives to create indexes and catalogues.

In the first half of the twentieth century the global map of European charms became increasingly complete and precise. Broadening possibilities for cooperation and the exchange of opinions were crudely interrupted by the Second World War and the subsequent sharp cultural rift that divided Europe for forty years. Following a period when local research also lost dynamism for a few decades, in the second half of the twentieth century such efforts were revived, launched or reinitiated all over Europe and even came to an unprecedented boom in certain fields such as the study of the magical texts of Antiquity (for example, Faraone–Obbink 1991; Meyer–Smith 1994; Betz 1996). The preface to Jonathan Roper’s 2009 volume offers a useful summary of these processes—nevertheless, let us mention here at least the most important “national” summary volumes, attempts at systematisation and text collections that appeared one after the other in Western and Eastern Europe alike: in Germany (Spamer–Nickel 1958; Schulz 2003), in Holland (van Haver 1964), Sicily (Bonomo 1953), France (Bozóky 2003), as well as the Ukrainian, Belarusian, Romanian, Bulgarian, Czech, Hungarian etc. collections of Central and Eastern European charms (for example, Möderndorfer 1964; Radenković 1982; Pócs 1985–6; Cristescu–Golopentia 2003).

Jonathan Roper’s publication of the English textual corpus and the related attempt at systematisation (Roper 2005) included a proposal to create international indexes of charms, which opened a new trend in this research. Drafting such indexes became one of the common objectives of members of the previously mentioned Charms Committee and two of the authors of the present volume, Andrei Toporkov and Tatiana Agapkina, as well as another Russian researcher, Vladimir Kliaus (see, for example, Kliaus 1997), are currently the most ardent scholars pursuing this aim. Creating indexes is necessitated by the sheer size of the textual corpus: since the beginning of ethnographic collecting in the nineteenth century to the present day our European folklore archives have amassed hundreds of thousands (!) of charms. Most of them lend themselves to direct study only to researchers who are highly competent in the given language, but without catalogues and indexes even such scholars would be lost in the vast mass of textual material.

The scholarly conventions mentioned above, the two volumes edited by Roper to date (Roper 2004 and Roper 2009) and other conference proceedings currently in print, as well as the present volume, are all the fruit of international cooperation. The present volume contains mostly the considerably extended and revised versions of papers given at the Pécs conference (and also includes a paper by Francisco Vaz da Silva, who was unable to attend). We present the results of research carried out in England, Scotland, Russia, Lithuania, Norway, Romania, Portugal, France, Finland and Hungary. Authors come from varied fields, ranging from linguistics through literature and folklore research to historical anthropology and comparative religion. We gave contributors no particular restrictions on content or methodology – the only criterion besides excellent quality was that the paper should be about verbal charms. In this way the volume is characterised by methodological, as well as thematic, diversity.

Through focusing on a noted historical figure in charm research, the first two papers offer a groundbreaking insight into the processes of knowledge and genre “construction” as well as the development of the classic methodology of folklore collection. *Arne Bugge Amundsen* analyses the oeuvre of the theologian, clerical historian and folklore researcher Christian Bang (1840–1913), the leading figure at the outset of Norwegian folklore research in the nineteenth century. Bang collected a vast body of magical formulas and books of magic, which he published in 1901–2. Amundsen analyses Bang’s methods for collecting, recording and organising material, examining how he and his fellow collectors constructed a folklore genre in the archives, in published charm texts and in the actual research. The author also explores the development of Bang’s role as a modern researching ethnographer and the shift of his focus and transformations of his attitude towards non-Christian charms. All of this gives us an important insight into Bang’s navigation between Romantic nationalism, Enlightenment rationalism and Protestant theology, and a record of the impact of these perspectives on his delineation of the genre.

Domhnall Uilleam Stiùbhart analyses the work of the most noted collector of Scottish Gaelic charms, Alexander Carmichael (1832–1912), and the various aspects of the emergence of the massive collection of Gaelic folklore, the fruit of 50 years’ work, Carmichael’s six-volume *Carmina Gadelica* (1900–1971). The central core of the col-

lection is the material on charms, analysis of which is rendered particularly topical at present as Carmichael's notebooks have been recently found. Stiùbhart analyses Carmichael's first and later repeated records and compares them with the texts that were eventually published, thus tracking the researcher's collecting trips through the Scottish isles, observing his methods of collection and also how the polished texts, transformed for wider audiences, were created by using a mosaic of different variants or by other means such as "correcting" the poems or "mythologising" the texts. Thus we are presented with the collector, the methods of collection and the process of "constructing" the collection itself. To use the author's own words, it is "the lengthy process of assembling, synthesising, editing—and reworking—a lifetime's ethnographic study to create perhaps the most influential charm collection ever printed". All of this also sheds light on several general aspects of the history of scholarship of the nineteenth-century beginnings of folklore studies that are also instructive for other genres and other regions of Europe.

The next set of papers in the volume are devoted to the classification and terminology of verbal charms from various perspectives. Speaking in the context of plans for an international index of charms, *Tatiana Agapkina* and *Andrei Toporkov* map out the difficulties in classification of their own rich East Slavic (Russian, Ukrainian and Belarussian) database, proposing solutions and offering a wealth of illustrative examples. Their material ranges from fifteenth-century manuscripts to the results of the expeditions carried out in the 1970s and 1980s in Polesia. They chose narrative charms as the subject of their experiment and, within that field, a few types of healing texts widespread in Europe (*Longinus-Segen*, the *2nd Merseburg Charm*, *Ungerechte Mann*, and so on). Based on the material of these types they have shaped a possible order of systematisation, using a hierarchy of thematic groups, functional groups and finally motif-based groups and types. The authors invite debate on the model index entry that they have produced, asking how far the model may prove useful for various international indexes and how these might result in an international comparative charm index.

Edina Bozóky offers a historical and typological-classificatory study using medieval textual relics of the most widely known European types of narrative charms (*Flum Jordan*, *Longinus-Segen*, *Drei*

Engel-Segen, and so on). In this pan-European overview Bozóky relies mostly on investigations by Ohrt, but besides the comprehensive view she also focuses on a number of local variants and characteristics. She touches on a few crucial linguistic problems such as the question of the Latin/vernacular variants, and that of multilingual collections or of bilingualism within one text, and the problems of textual dissemination between different languages, and looks at certain aspects of the mediating process that may be observed in various types of narrative charms.

Vilmos Voigt examines the Hungarian word *báj* (charm), which has a Turkic origin and connections, exploring its historical occurrences and changes in meaning, and also examining other Hungarian terms used with the meaning of “charm”, “magician” and “charmer”. Using the word *báj* with the meaning of “witchcraft” to refer to *ima* (prayer), *bájoló imádság* (magical prayer) also serves as an interesting contribution to the problematic issue of the intertwining of charms and prayers around the late eighteenth century.

Voigt’s paper also serves as an introduction to a series of papers in the volume that offer historical analyses of varying depth and perspective. *Lea Olsan* presents a most profound and nuanced philological analysis based on tenth- to sixteenth-century English text material. Her paper examines magic manuscripts as well as books of magic and recipe books to identify how the marginalisation of charms takes place in the case of different types, situations, contexts and types of use (from charms written physically on the margins and blank pages of medical books or wedged into the text of other genres, to charms disdained by Scholastic medicine, subordinated to other types or simply serving everyday practical needs, as well as the suppression of charms through manuscript censorship). Based on the above, Olsan is able to draw extensive conclusions regarding the role that charms played in contemporary elements of culture, and the way in which they related to literature as oral performance, to professional medicine as the practice of lay healers, to rites as verbal act, to religious prayers as a magical genre, and so on. The paper thus also focuses on those questions of generic definition and delineation that appear at many other points in the volume, particularly as regards the line between charms and prayers. Similarly to several other authors in the volume, Olsan’s specific analyses offer commentary on the process of the Christianisa-

tion of charms, i.e. the interconnections between clerical genres and non-Christian charms.

Éva Pócs analyses in her paper the connections and interactions of clerical benedictions and charms in the medieval and early modern period, and draws conclusions regarding the origin and historical connections of the clerical motifs of Hungarian charms. The examples that she offers illustrate how rural healers integrate texts and gestures from the practice of priests into their own magical repertoire and how they “Christianise” the lay practice of charms. She goes on to discuss the analogous roles and interconnections of medieval priesthood and popular weather magicians.

Dániel Bárh offers concrete examples to substantiate the tendencies outlined in the previous paper by examining eighteenth-century collections of benedictions from Hungarian monasteries. At the same time, he explores the role of the Franciscan, Jesuit and Benedictine monastic orders in the practical application of benedictions and exorcisms and their mediation towards lay practice. The collections of benedictions in question offer a basis for examining questions of origin of popular charms and prayers in the nineteenth- and twentieth-century oral tradition referred to in the previous paper.

Daiva Vaitkevičienė contributes a comparative paper on the connections between Lithuanian, Latvian and Slavic charms living as oral tradition. She focuses on similarities and differences between motifs from Baltic and Slavic mythology, and on shared cultural traditions and unique characteristics. She also looks at the appearance of various mythological motifs in different genres (songs, riddles) of the Baltic and Slavic textual tradition.

While the papers mentioned so far only occasionally and tangentially touch on the belief aspect of charms, the last set of texts in the book treat this as one of their central questions. *Emanuela Timotin's* thorough philological analysis explores the role played by the sickness demon *năjit* in Romanian charms by examining the text, context and use of seventeenth- to nineteenth-century manuscripts. The word *năjit* itself denotes a demon causing magically based illnesses, migraines or other headaches, and usually appears in the *historiola* of *Begeg-nunssegen*-type charms. By analysing the Slavic parallels and possible ancient antecedents of the texts in these manuscripts, the author examines the diffusion of the Greek manuscript tradition through Slavic

texts towards their Romanian variants. At the same time, she tracks the historical changes of the demon figure and its textual context, in other words the process of the survival of pre-Christian beliefs in Christianised texts. In this way Timotin, like other authors in the volume, touches on the question of the generic boundary between prayers and charms.

Francisco Vaz da Silva examines several types of moon charms in order to analyse an archaic belief that emerges from the “archaic deep strata” of the pre-Christian legacy, namely the connection between water/soul and vapour/breath, as well as the connection between the moon and the tide. These charms are used to protect young children from the deadly effect of the wind and vapour during certain phases of the moon. As the author puts it, “lunar charms in Portuguese ethnography presuppose the widespread notion that lunar phases operate transitions of air/soul (along with fluids) between this world and the otherworld”.

Maarit Viljakainen examines the role and attributes of the Virgin Mary in 219 Orthodox charms to do with childbirth collected in eastern Finland and Karelia. Mary appears in the *historiolas* of narrative charms as a benign maternal figure supporting mothers in childbirth. She plays a similar role in prayers that are addressed to her in the difficult hours of birth.

The final paper in this volume approaches charms and the practice of charming alongside miracles, visions and bewitchments, as part of a broader concern with “words of power” more generally. *Gábor Klaniczay* refers to a number of key themes and concerns of charm scholarship, such as the role and relationship between clerical and lay practice and the significance of oral practice in relation to the written word. For his analysis he draws on two main bodies of texts, miracle narratives from official canonisation records and the documentation of sixteenth-century Transylvanian witch trials. In doing so, he aims to point beyond the more complex and formulaic forms of charm and prayer that have been preserved in the written record to the oral record of the context and spontaneity of the use of words of power.

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CHAPTER 1

A Genre in the Making. The First Study of Charms in Norway

Arne Bugge Amundsen

In Norway, as in most other European countries, the nineteenth-century collection and analysis of the older parts of the oral and written popular culture took Romantic national ideas as their point of departure. This meant, among other things, that collectors and scholars in the field of folklore were interested primarily in finding or extracting those traces of national identity that were of historical, moral and aesthetic value. Through the systematic study of popular narratives and practices Norwegian scholars aimed at understanding, interpreting and reinforcing notions of historical continuity and cultural contingency within the framework of Norwegian history.

Parts of this academic enterprise were practised with standards and theories that from the perspective of modern scholarly research may be described as pre-scholarly. From the perspective of the nineteenth century, however, this meant only that scholarly activities were not restricted to persons employed by a university, that the theories and methods of scholarship were not restricted to a clearly labelled “academic discipline”, and that the non-scholarly intentions and contexts of such academic enterprises are easily identified. However, a new look at these endeavors might in many cases indicate how recent scholarly projects are closely connected to projects and contexts of the past. Scrutinising the history of present scholarly disciplines is therefore a part of contextualising questions relevant to contemporary scholarship.

A Norwegian Example

In the young state and nation of Norway, which became independent in 1814, academic traditions were few and poor. It was not until 1811 that Norway had its own university, and for a couple of generations it had only a small staff of academic teachers. Few of the professors of the new university were of high academic calibre, and their scholarly merits were in general not very impressive (Collett 1999, 56ff). Several decades passed before the new Norwegian university was able to establish a reasonable level of qualitatively and quantitatively adequate scholarly activity. As a consequence, research on the history and culture of the young state was carried out mostly by scholars without formal positions at the University (see Kjus 2003, 39ff).

This meant, among other things, that much of the folklore collecting and folklore studies were in the hands of academically trained persons outside the university. In Norway that implied that these persons would be Lutheran clergymen. In the new Norway these were state officials and constituted a group united by its national agenda. Their aim was to establish an interpretative culture of history, culture and nation to the reading, and thus qualified, public of the new state. The determining element of this project was the idea that history, culture and tradition should be transformed into aesthetically and morally acceptable forms. In Norway, the search was for a “Norwegian voice”, where vernacular language and expression were to be distinct from the Danish and foreign, but also acceptable to the small national elite normatively close to Danish culture. Those authors or scholars who did not find the right national voice or literary style were marginalised or condemned to eternal oblivion (Amundsen 2002, 54ff).

Few officials of the new Norwegian state other than the clerics were in the position of having had any academic training. The clergy’s point of view, the clerical interpretative strategy, implied a combination of Enlightenment and Romantic ideas and Lutheran theology. Their interest in national history and national language came only as an addition to these points of departure.

Popular Culture and Moral Evaluation

Another very important aspect of the fact that the new national elite should be identified more or less as the Lutheran clergy was the moral evaluation of popular culture. To regard themselves as simple peasants was not at all part of the perspective of the Norwegian clergy. This had an important consequence in that the majority of nineteenth-century Norwegian folklore collectors and editors were clerical: Andreas Faye (1802–1869),¹ Jørgen Moe (1813–1882) and Magnus Brostrup Landstad (1802–1880) may be mentioned as the most important. Moreover, elements of the peasants' culture were traditionally a field of conflict (Hodne 1982; Berge 1920).

One very important part of the Lutheran clergy's concern with popular traditions should be noted: their moral evaluation of certain parts of these traditions. When confronted with remnants from Norway's Catholic past, they most often commented on this as a problematic fact, and when popular traditions referred to different kinds of moral misconduct, they reported the traditions—and condemned their low moral standard.

In the field of popular charms and charming, a phenomenon often related to popular magic or healing activities, this moral evaluation is quite obvious and expected. The first generations of clerical folklore collectors hardly wanted to touch this kind of material at all, and if they ever did, they hesitated to publish it or to make it publicly known. In their view, sources or practices of this kind could hardly make a contribution to national identity or cultural development. They did not doubt the fact that charms and charmers were part of contemporary popular culture in Norway, but considered this part of popular culture to be without aesthetic or cultural value.

However, in the last part of the nineteenth century in Norway one single scholar seems to have tried to change some of these positions. His efforts, his scholarly activities and his role as the first systematic collector and editor of Norwegian charms and magic manuscripts will be at the centre of this article. His achievements were without doubt

¹ See in general the analysis in Amundsen 2002.

the basis of all later studies on this specific part of Norwegian popular culture.

Anton Christian Bang—Theologian, Church Historian, Folklorist

The name of this scholar was Anton Christian Bang (1840–1913). (See Amundsen and Eriksen 1999, 101ff; Brandrud 1923, vol. I, 361–4.) He was a theologian, and from the 1870s he was employed at the Faculty of Theology in Kristiania or Oslo. He was the first at the faculty to define his academic work within church history as a separate discipline. Until then, church history had been associated with the normative analysis of the development of Christian doctrine. The first steps towards developing church history as a separate discipline at the Norwegian university had been taken by Professor Carl Paul Caspari (1814–1892), who since the 1840s had been an internationally known scholar within the field of church history and patristic studies (Brandrud 1925, vol. II, 493–7).

Anton Christian Bang belonged to the next generation of theologians at the university. This was a numerous generation and Bang's academic career was quite complex and competitive. Having finished his theological education, he had to apply for a position as a clergyman. In addition to this position he managed to nurture his academic interests, and in 1876 he was the first in Norway to present a doctoral thesis in divinity. The thesis was an effort to use modern historical methodology in order to prove the historical validity of the narratives of the resurrection of Christ.

This was only the first stage of the academic activities of Anton Christian Bang. Having finished his dissertation, his interests went in new directions, and he developed an academic profile as both a theologian and a historian specialising in the church history of Norway. From the late 1870s he concentrated his scholarly efforts on three separate thematic fields. The first involved general surveys of Norwegian church history with a special emphasis on the post-Reformation period (Bang 1895 and 1912). As a church historian he quite early focused on a second field: the study of the Pietist religious culture in post-Reformation Norway. In 1874, he published the first monograph ever written

on the most central lay preacher in nineteenth-century Norway, Hans Nielsen Hauge (1771–1824). Hauge was the ideological founding father of a conservative Pietist majority within Norwegian church life. By writing this monograph, Bang also aligned himself as the theological defender of Hauge and his Pietist movement still flourishing in Norway in the 1870s (Bang 1874, cf. Amundsen 1997, 216ff).

At the same time, Anton Christian Bang also published several studies within a third field, namely the *Non-Pietist religious culture of Norway*, thus telling his readers and students that nineteenth-century Pietism was not the only popular tradition in their country. After 1879 when he was inspired by Professor Sophus Bugge (1833–1907) and Bugge's theories on the relationship between Norse literature and continental, Germanic and classic literary traditions, his work became known even outside Norway. Bang's point of departure was the many parallels between the Norse poem *Völuspá* and the so-called Sibylline Oracles, an apocryphal Late Antique source deriving from Classical Greek culture. Both Bugge and Bang were severely criticised because their theories conflicted with the commonly held notion that the Scandinavian literary sources and expressions were uniquely Scandinavian. To question this notion was in the eyes of many of their critics identical with questioning the idea of Norwegian national culture (see Amundsen 2001, 11ff).

The church historian Anton Christian Bang had clearly and publicly demonstrated that his main interest was the analysis of historical connections between different periods and cultures. His further interest in the study of popular religious culture in Norway was hardly surprising. What was slightly more surprising, however, was that Bang concentrated on elements of this culture that were hardly acceptable to Lutheran principles. But what, then, did Bang find when he took up this field of interest?

Being the son of a simple and quite poor fisherman in northern Norway, Bang was quite familiar with many of the contemporary popular traditions and beliefs. In his autobiography of 1909 he made many references to this part of his childhood and youth (Bang 1909). For the rest of his life Bang seems to have had a quite clear and understandable ambivalence regarding popular culture: He knew it from the inside, but as a theologian, a scholar and a clergyman he was obliged to keep it at a distance.

Be that as it may, Anton Christian Bang could hardly have been surprised to find past and present popular conceptions of traditional Christian heroes and other supernatural beings differing from what was common among the Pietist groups gathering around their hymn-books and Bibles every Sunday afternoon. Bang found remnants of the Catholic faith and piety, even remnants of pre-Christian Norwegian religion—and he found black and white magic.

Bang's Studies on Popular Belief and Practices

Bang started to publish articles on these issues in the 1880s and he also included perspectives on pre-Pietist popular culture in his general surveys of Norway's church history. This part of his academic career culminated in a monumental work published in 1901–1902: a scholarly edition consisting of almost 800 printed pages of the *Norwegian magic formulae and magic books* known up to that time. Some of the material had been collected by Bang himself, other magic books were in the possession of the professor of folklore studies at the University of Kristiania, Moltke Moe (1859–1913), and the last part consisted of manuscripts found in different libraries and private collections (Bang 1901–2).

How, then, did Anton Christian Bang interpret this material? In the first place, he used his training as a historian to describe and analyse the origins and history of the different manuscripts. His oldest find was in the library of the gymnasium in Kristiania. Since around 1800 this library had been in possession of a small manuscript miscellany. It had been used as an *album amicorum* (*Stammbuch*) among clergymen; it contained a substantial number of Marian hymns and verses of pre-Lutheran origin, but the most central part of the book was a considerable number of magic formulae ranging from charms for stopping blood and curing sick horses to rather blasphemous texts (Bang 1888, 539–48).

Bang dated the manuscript to about 1520—that is, about twenty years before the Lutheran Reformation in Norway—and he interpreted it in two ways. Firstly, he took the manuscript as a proof of the low moral and theological standards of the Catholic clergy in Norway—being of such a low standard, it was hardly surprising that the Lutheran

Reformation came as both a cultural relief and a religious solution. Secondly, he found that most of the magical formulae were imported from abroad. This kind of magic was not originally Norwegian, but imported from Europe. On the other hand: much of this imported magical material was part of a common pre-Christian Germanic legacy. The *dramatis personae* of the magical formulae had originally been Germanic gods and goddesses, but the formulae had been Christianised by the medieval church. Thus Odin, Balder or Freya had been replaced by St. Peter, Christ or the Virgin Mary (Bang 1890, 326–37 and 342).

Magic Manuscripts as Literary Sources

This perspective paved the way for Bang to try to understand the magic manuscripts as literary sources of high importance for Norwegian cultural history. He was clearly aware of the fact that most of the manuscripts available to him had been in the possession of Norwegian farmers and fishermen in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The magic books, then, were part of a popular literature read and used by peasants with at least a rudiment of education.

But in the period before the magic books and formulae had been removed to the fertile soil of superstitious farmers, they had actually been part of a more learned culture. Students and learned persons must have brought these manuscripts with them to Norway from abroad, and actually used them. The manuscript from the 1520s was the oldest example of this process, but Bang found several others as well.

True to nineteenth-century scholarly tradition, Anton Christian Bang postulated that there must have been one single source of all the Norwegian magic manuscripts. He suggested that one learned man around 1600 had brought with him a copy of a Danish magic manuscript, “the Danish Ur-Cyprianus”, the famous *grimoire* falsely ascribed to St. Cyprian of Carthage or St. Cyprian of Antioch so often referred to in Danish manuscripts of this kind. Other learned men copied this copy, but during this process, the copyists imported other magical formulae—partly from written books, and partly from oral tradition. In this way, Bang tried to construct some kind of a genealogical tree for all his manuscripts. This genealogical tree, however, collapsed when in the eighteenth century manuscript-copying ceased to be an activity of

learned men, and instead became part of more popular cultural practices. The differences between the manuscripts then became so striking that any clear development or connection between them became impossible to reconstruct (*ibid.*, 345ff, 348).

Whether Bang's observations and analyses of his material were, or are, in accordance with historical fact, or relevant to modern scholarship in the field, is less interesting in this connection. What I find interesting is that he was the first Norwegian scholar who actually pointed out the historical source value of this kind of material. Bang also managed to place this source material in a quite differentiated social and cultural context, following the magical formulae from period to period, from one group of writers or copyists to another.

And—as another important element in this connection—he also tried to incorporate the development of this magical material into a national historical and literary process. As Bang saw it, the magic manuscripts originated in a copying activity with a foreign, Germanic, medieval and Roman Catholic point of departure and ended as expressions of Norwegian popular magical tradition. In other words, Bang tried to establish some sort of a national canon in the field of magical formulae.

Magic Not Being Part of the National Canon

Despite this, Bang did not take the full step of including these sources in the national canon of Norwegian folk traditions. He was too much of a Lutheran clergyman to be able to neutralise a negative moral judgement on the contents, functions and uses of the magical books and formulae.

Bang's negative judgement followed at least three lines of thought. The first line of thought was that as magical expressions and strategies these manuscripts had been intended for the propagation of evil thoughts and intentions. And that, of course, could only be condemned by a clergyman like Bang. This was overwhelmingly so in the case of the spells, the demonological descriptions, and the conjurations of the Devil or his demons. This was also the case when the formulae were intended to harm an enemy or to cast a spell over a former lover or a hostile neighbour. But it was also condemnable to ask for help from seemingly acceptable Christian heroes like Christ, the saints or

the Virgin Mary when trying to cure a horse, to stop bleeding, or to assist women in childbirth.

According to Anton Christian Bang, the mere use of fixed prayers or incantations or holy words indicated “a naïve belief in the power of the words themselves” (Bang 1885, 184)—and this was incompatible with the Lutheran way of interpreting the relationship between men and the Christian God. According to Bang this was not religion, and neither was it pious conduct—it was superstition, it was magic, it was the remnants of a “corrupted Catholicism”. Which of these was in his eyes the worst, is in fact difficult to decide.

The second line of thought that lead to Bang’s negative judgement about the magic manuscripts was not just that most of their contents were remnants of a “corrupted Catholicism”, but that this Catholicism was but a thin historical layer over the deep structures and motifs—the contents were in fact remnants of the pre-Christian Germanic religion and culture (*ibid.*, 187 and 209). To support this perspective, Bang tried to trace other remnants of pre-Christian religion in Norwegian popular culture as well. And he found such traces using historical sources dating from the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries and even from as late as around 1860. These traces in his view established that some individuals in rural regions of Norway still practised heathen rituals, venerated images of local evil spirits, presented votive offerings to them on certain occasions during the year, and worshipped them in different ways. If this was not an argument in favour of condemning also the owners and users of magical books, Bang asked, then what would be (Bang 1890, 336)?

The third line of thought that Bang presented was that the use of magic—black or white, Christian or Germanic—was superstitious, which meant that it was a practice not in accordance with modern principles of reason and thinking. Any real effect or result of such magical acts or practices could not be expected, even if people were of the opinion that the results of such practices were real and according to historically documented experience. This line of argument indicated, according to Bang, that the development of modern Norwegians’ minds and strategies when confronted with illness, enemies or other kinds of problems, no longer had any practical use for magical charms, not even among none-too-well-educated common folk (Bang 1901–2, xxxxi).

History and the Lack of Lasting Value

In Anton Christian Bang's eyes the lasting value of this material was that it was a part of a more or less national past. The magic manuscripts were historical sources now accessible for analysis by modern scholars. And these scholars—not being familiar with sources like these—were in need of a systematised and analytical printed edition of all known texts of the kind.

“Some might get the idea that they should criticise me for being the editor of a book like this,” Bang—then having been the Bishop of Kristiania for five years—wrote in the preface of his *magnum opus* on Norwegian magical formulae in 1901. He continued by stating that he was excused by the fact that the Norwegian people were now so educated and enlightened that there was little danger that anyone would try to use these printed texts for any harmful acts. He proclaimed that what he had done was simply this: just like the natural scientist, who describes even disgusting species of nature or analyses the most harmful and dangerous disease, he had as a historian felt obliged to present even the evil, immoral and blasphemous elements of the past.

By using this kind of rhetoric Anton Christian Bang both kept his clerical identity intact and preserved his position as a modern scholar. He also managed to analyse another very important element in Norwegian popular culture of the past, identifying this element as an interesting contribution to the development of national processes—without including this element in a national canon of folk traditions.

Bang left his academic career in the stricter sense, and dedicated the remaining years until his death in 1913 to ecclesiastical affairs. But his importance as the first scholar in Norway to scrutinise the magic manuscripts and to include them in a broader perspective of the development of a national cultural history also contributed to a kind of marginalisation of this part of folklore studies in Norway. Very few Norwegian folklorists since the nineteenth century have dedicated themselves to the study of magic manuscripts and formulae.² So there

² Among the quite few exceptions are Espeland 1974, Grambo 1979, Amundsen 1987.

are still many unsolved problems in this field, and yet many questions to be asked.

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CHAPTER II

The Making of a Charm Collector. Alexander Carmichael in Uist, From 1864 To 1882

Domhnall Uilleam Stiùbhart

Introduction

Contemporary scholarship on charms tends towards the analytic and synchronic, focusing upon the creation and refinement of universal typologies. Given the exceptionally multilingual and disparate nature of this particular branch of folklore scholarship, and indeed the lack of crucial contextual information in many older folklore archives, it could hardly be otherwise: a necessary search for cross-border commonalities and common origins, culminating, it is to be hoped, in an international charms database, which promises to revolutionise the field. Nevertheless, on the rare occasions when sufficient contextual information is available, when, assisted by the in-depth knowledge of local historians and genealogists, we can attempt to situate and interpret original performances and investigate the actors involved, there admits the possibility of an alternative approach. Such an approach might allow us not only to observe and investigate the process of gathering charm texts, but also to glean crucial details about the personae of the charmers themselves, their attitudes towards their charms, and indeed the wider functions of charms within particular communities. Alexander Carmichael's labyrinthine manuscript collection, the fruits of over fifty years of tireless recording now preserved in Edinburgh University Library, offers such an opportunity.

Despite the rich harvest of vernacular charms gathered throughout the Gaelic-speaking areas of northern and western Scotland by the subject of this article, the folklorist and antiquary Alexander Carmichael (1832–1912), himself a Gael from the Isle of Lismore, only a handful had been written down before intensive folklore collecting began there in the second half of the nineteenth century. A small number survive in legal and ecclesiastical documents from the later seventeenth century, recorded as evidence against charmers, possibly also due to the belief that writing out verbal incantations deprived them of power.¹ Although various amulets and other periapts were collected in the region during the eighteenth century, only four manuscript Gaelic charm texts date from this period: one (doubtless intended for thieves or wooers) to prevent a dog barking; two against evil eye, both accompanied by the derisive marginalia of the minister who recorded them, the Rev. James MacLagan (1728–1805), chaplain to the Black Watch regiment; finally, one protective charm from the western region of North Carolina settled by Gaelic emigrants.² A mere three Gaelic charms had been published, originally almost concurrently, in the 1840s: a protective charm (a *seun* or *sian*) from the Isle of Mull, probably obtained from an army veteran, and a cure for worms and a charm against evil eye printed as an illustrative footnote to a charm reference in John Mackenzie's anthology *Sàr-Obair nam Bàrd Gaelach: or, The Beauties of Gaelic Poetry*, with a commentary beginning thus: "An incantation of great antiquity, handed down to us from the classic era of Homer. It has still its class of sturdy believers in many remote and pastoral districts of the Highlands..." (MacLeod 1867, 342–3).

For most literate Scottish Gaels of the nineteenth century, charms were at best simple curiosities remembered from childhood, a province of the old and credulous. At worst, summoning up images of evil eye and the irrational superstition of a more primitive age, charms were far from welcome in the modern Gaelic canon. A striking expression

¹ Balfour and Mackenzie 1914, 295; Carmichael 1900–1971 [henceforth CG], IV, 167; MacPhail 1920, 5, 6, 9 and 19; Paton 1932, 10, 12, 13, 15–20 and 22. See also Martin 1703, 120–22; Campbell and Thomson 1963, 58 and 69; Hunter 2001, 17, 67–8, 76, 81, 99, 107–11 and 196.

² Glasgow University Library, MS Gen 1042/64/3 and 1042/244; Black 2007, 39–58.

of the latter perspective comes from the entrepreneurial collector par excellence John Dewar (1802–1872). Dewar was possessed of a rather caustic opinion of charms, ascribing their invention to “Druids” who duped the people with tales:

That the fairies had the power of being either visible or invisible, as they thought proper, and that they had the power of enchanting people, and of taking them away and make fairies of them; and that the Druids had charms which would prevent that... The Druidical priests pretended that they had charms that would prevent the witches from doing any harm, and they would give a charm for payment. [...] Beil or Beul was the name which the Druids gave their god, and the Druids of Beil pretended to be the friends of the people; they pretended to have charms to cure different kinds of diseases, and also charms to prevent fairies, ghosts, and witches, from annoying or harming people. It is a well-known fact, that the superstitions of the Druids has been handed down from generation to generation for a great many ages, and is not wholly extinct yet... (Campbell 1890–1892, I, lii [printed verbatim]; see also MacLeod 1834, 178–9).

The remarkable rehabilitation, or even idealisation, of the charm genre in Gaelic, its rescue from widespread hostility and condescension, can be ascribed primarily to the efforts of Alexander Carmichael.

Carmichael’s collection of Gaelic charms is perhaps the most well-known, certainly the most controversial, printed anthology of charm texts and other vernacular oral religious material in the English-speaking world.³ This extensive series of texts lies at the heart of *Carmina Gadelica* (1900–1971), the multifarious six-volume ethnographic compendium on which Carmichael’s posthumous reputation

³ For recent scholarship on Carmichael, see especially the papers in Stiùbhart 2008a. In Gaelic the most common term for charm is *eòlas* (a knowledge), less frequently *òra*, while *ob* is now purely literary. As introductions to charms and charm types in Gaelic, the following have still not been superseded: Macbain 1890–1891, 221–66; Mackenzie 1891–1892, 97–182; MacLagan 1902, 91–107.

is based. Following a particularly irascible academic controversy in the late 1970s, scholars have been wary of engaging with such items, especially in the two volumes that Carmichael edited himself (see especially Robertson 1976, 220–65; Campbell 1978, 1–17). Once it was clear that many *Carmina* charm texts had been polished, regularised, archaicised, extended and even recreated by Carmichael, it was felt that as long as his original fieldnotes were missing, the scope of editorial interference could not be clarified. Given the absolute centrality of Carmichael's collection to Scottish Gaelic charm studies, recurring doubts about the authenticity of his texts meant that the genre itself languished unstudied.

Carmichael's field recordings were not missing. The search for field *notes*, as well as his atrocious handwriting, led scholars to overlook some 26 notebooks in which he recorded items in the field. These field notebooks, robust, portable and convenient to write in, provide a remarkable insight into the oral literature, customs, beliefs, and traditions of the Gàidhealtachd, the Gaelic-speaking areas of Scotland, especially in the islands of the Outer Hebrides, where he worked for the excise between 1864 and 1882. We can effectively peer over Carmichael's shoulder as he scribbles down barely legible texts, and thus trace his changing interests and methodologies over a period of some fifty years. Many of these texts are vernacular Scottish Gaelic charms, although it should be stressed that for Carmichael as for many of his contemporaries (not to mention many of our own), whether collectors or charmers themselves, the putative boundaries separating charms proper from prayers, blessings, curses, hymns and indeed work songs are ill-defined and distinctly porous.

Alexander Carmichael's recording methodologies, if not necessarily his later editing practices, were determined in large part by the folklore apprenticeship that he served in the early 1860s collecting Gaelic narratives under the direction of the aristocratic polymath John Francis Campbell (1821–1885). In undertaking this project, which resulted in the four-volume *Popular Tales of the West Highlands* (1860–1862), Campbell, anxious to avoid the imputations of folklore fraud that had dogged the literary career of his Highland predecessor James "Ossian" Macpherson (1736–1796), utilised the same techniques of meticulous data collection, categorisation, assessment and corroboration that he employed in compiling official surveys in his capacity

as a civil servant. He impressed upon those working under him not just the need for accuracy in recording texts, but also the importance of documenting the name, patronymic, age and indeed status of the informant, as well as the date and location of the performance itself. Carmichael not only habitually jotted down such crucial contextual information as part of his fieldwork, but occasionally supplemented it with more personal observations, as well as later reminiscences and even reconstructions written up long after the original event. Although Carmichael's recollections must be treated with some caution, the rich contextual information to be gleaned from his papers allows us the unaccustomed luxury of charting how one of the foremost folklore collectors of his age went about acquiring charms, and how gradually, over a decade and a half, he came to engage with the genre that would make his name.

Some caveats should be noted concerning the charm data available in Carmichael's archive. Firstly, it is not uncommon to come across transcriptions of original recordings as yet untraced or else missing forever. Again, it is evident from instances where we can compare originals and later copies that Carmichael did not transcribe every single item from his field notebooks. Nevertheless, where we have a series of transcribed items from one specific occasion, it is probable that they have been set down in the order in which they were originally dictated—even though this may not represent the entire recording session. To make matters even more convoluted, ascriptions to the original recordings make it clear that the supposedly canonical list of attributions to informants as printed at the end of the second volume of *Carmina Gadelica* is by no means wholly trustworthy.

More specific problems further compromise the surviving evidence. Later memoranda jotted into Carmichael's original field notebooks refer to one major transcription volume, *No. III*, now no longer extant. A subsequent *No. IV* volume has, however, survived.⁴ Given that the originals of several charm texts copied into *No. IV* are now missing, it seems likely that the same was the case for some items transcribed into the lost *No. III*. We do have draft lists of charm titles, with

⁴ This volume is now catalogued as Edinburgh University Library [EUL] CW MS 7.

apparently generally credible ascriptions to informants attached, which were compiled by Carmichael while preparing the first two volumes of *Carmina Gadelica*. These suggest that, in addition to the 63 texts that we possess definitely dated to the years that he spent collecting in the Outer Hebrides, there may have been at least 13, and maybe as many as 21, other items recorded during this period whose originals are no longer extant (CW MS 124, fols. 2–8). Some of the charms recorded by Alexander Carmichael, therefore, are surely gone forever in their original form. With his archive incomplete, the corollary is that although we might suspect or even presume substantial and pervasive editorial interference throughout the charm texts eventually printed in *Carmina Gadelica*, definitive proof must remain forever out of reach. Ironically, it is often the case that the original items that we do have, dashed out in Carmichael's appalling scrawl, can ultimately be deciphered only by referring to the printed versions, no matter how compromised and problematic these might be. A final admonition remains: we should always bear it in mind that in the final reckoning we have to rely upon the recorder's interpretation of what he heard—and for all his experience, Carmichael was by no means infallible.

Given Carmichael's posthumous reputation as an assiduous charm collector, it is perhaps surprising to observe how relatively infrequently such items occur in manuscripts dating from the first decade of his collecting endeavours. Indeed, most of the surviving folklore material from this period consists of narrative texts and Fenian ballads: in other words, the most prestigious matter publicly recounted in the céilidh house. In late 1864 Carmichael secured an excise post based in the Protestant island of North Uist in the Outer Hebrides off the north-west coast of Scotland, taking in responsibility for the Catholic islands in the south of the archipelago, renowned then as now for their rich Gaelic tradition. During the years that he spent working in the Outer Isles his interests would expand to embrace other aspects of oral culture—historical anecdotes, songs by men and women, proverbs, individual items of vocabulary, prayers, blessings, cures and charms.

Carmichael had moved to an area that had suffered more than most districts in the Scottish Gàidhealtachd during the "Age of Clearance". From the mid-eighteenth century, commercial reorientation of Highland estates and massive population growth placed the subsistence economy of the region on an increasingly precarious footing. The

era was characterised by large-scale population expulsion, the departure of most of the indigenous intelligentsia, and the concentrated resettlement of those tenants who remained. South Uist in particular was administered as a plantation in which tenants were retained as reservoirs of manpower under a repressive régime in which the authorities did not scruple to use violence against the recalcitrant.

A key feature in the early years of Carmichael's stay in the Uists was a generational shift resulting from the gradual transfer of socio-cultural and indeed moral authority from an older age cohort, raised in communally worked townships during the final years in which most clan chiefs retained control of their ancestral estates, to a younger generation, brought up in the much more individualistic crofting system under the sway of incoming landlords possessing none of the residual traditional prestige of their predecessors. Younger islanders tended to be formally educated to some degree of literacy, with a considerably better command of English. Thanks to improved communication and transport networks, they were much more conversant with the outside world. A significant marker of identity for this new generation was a self-conscious distance from the past, even at the same time as it refashioned and redeployed memories of previous injustices in the service of the crofters' cause.

The real but fragile economic improvements that the younger generation enjoyed in wages, housing and diet by no means benefited the entire population. Modest gains had thrown into sharper relief the plight of those left behind, especially those cottars and paupers in the older generation who were the recipients of charity from the likes of Carmichael's wife Mary—individuals who were to be some of his best informants for prayers, blessings and charms. For Alexander Carmichael, the generation gap between those older people from whom he gathered traditional material and the—in his eyes at least—uninterested young was quite palpable. It should be stressed, however, that no more than any other era does this period represent a "transition" from a spurious "traditional" world to a supposedly "modern" one. Indeed, given the somewhat extreme and disorienting socio-economic and environmental stresses to which the population had been subject for some decades, it is quite possible that charming practices, with the concomitant claims and counter-claims of evil eye, had in fact become more rather than less salient during this period in the western Gàidhealtachd.

Using Alexander Carmichael's extant papers, we can trace when, where, and from whom he recorded charm texts—always acknowledging that some items may not have survived, while a small number of those still extant lack reliable dates. A straightforward statistical breakdown suggests that the most productive years for charms were 1875 and 1877, towards the end of Carmichael's time in Uist, when he recorded sixteen and ten charms respectively. He gathered eight in 1869 and in 1872, seven in 1874, six in 1867, two in 1870, and just one in 1873 and in 1880. Such figures, however, can only properly be interpreted if we bear in mind the number of informants from whom Carmichael recorded the texts. We thus find that during his entire sojourn in Uist Alexander Carmichael only ever recorded charms from at most six individuals a year, always during a single session each. 1875 stands out as an exception, the year during which Carmichael not only noted down sixteen charms from six different individuals, but also transcribed a number of similar texts that he had recorded some years earlier.

The remainder of this paper offers a preliminary exploration of just how Carmichael went about investigating and recording charm texts during his sojourn in Uist. In highlighting specific episodes and the identities of the participants involved, I hope to point out particular issues concerning the process of charm collecting and the nature of the surviving evidence that may be of some interest and value to other scholars working in the field, as well as drawing attention in general to the rich, complex legacy of charms and charming in the Scottish Gàidhealtachd.

Early Collecting, 1867–1870

The circumstances of Alexander Carmichael's earliest charm recordings, as far as they can be reconstructed from his manuscripts, suggest that his texts were acquired somewhat haphazardly. Nevertheless, it should be stressed that the fact that he was able to record such items at all is a tribute to his assiduousness and inclusivity as a collector, as well as to his personal charisma, his candour and integrity, and the deep-rooted trust clearly accorded him by his informants. Occasionally at least, Carmichael was acknowledged as to some extent one of their

own, as much participant in as observer of this particular interpretive community.⁵ This comes through clearly in what appears to be the first occasion when he recorded charms, on 16 October 1867 during a visit to Anna MacIsaac, *née* MacLellan (c. 1808–1883), in Ceann Langabhat, an t-Ìochdar, South Uist.⁶ Her husband Hector (c. 1797–1878) was one of the most celebrated *seanchaidhean* or storytellers in Uist in his day, from whom Carmichael had been recording heroic ballads since July 1865. An unusually frank note jotted into a field notebook the following year demonstrates how the two men had established a rapport:

He declares that When [he] is done planting his potatoes he will travel over the F[ord]—a dis[tance] of about 21 m[iles]—to give me a proper opp[ortunity] of taking down any word he has before he dies. He says he [has] neither son nor dau[ghter] except one little girl to whom he can leave his legacy of prose and poetry. And as he likes me better than any other person in the world he is desirous I should become poss[essor] of this invaluable legacy (CW MS 104, fols. 83^{r-v} 24 [Apr 1866]).⁷

Although the original field texts appear not to have survived, a later transcript dating from around 1884 enables us to piece together how Carmichael came to take down charms from Anna MacIsaac (CW MS 87, fols. 16–19).⁸ This opens not with the charm itself, but with a

⁵ This is nicely demonstrated by the distribution of Carmichael's charm informants, many of whom lived in the north end of the island of South Uist, near where Carmichael himself stayed during the principal years in which he was involved in collecting examples of the genre.

⁶ In *Carmina Gadelica* Carmichael ascribes a charm for rose, *Eolas na Ru*, to Catherine MacQueen, Fearann an Léith, Isle of Skye [CG II, 6–7, 347]: if the attribution is trustworthy, this must have been in the early 1860s when he was collecting in that island. It may be, however, that he confused her with another woman of the same name from Clachan a' Ghluip, North Uist, whom he apparently visited in 1868: CW 124, fol. 32^v.

⁷ Square brackets mark additions by the present writer.

⁸ The texts must have been transcribed some time between 13 Nov 1883, when the notebook was acquired, and 1 Aug 1885, when the next item was recorded.

remarkable passage in which Carmichael records how Mrs. MacIsaac presented him with a *Eàrna Mhoire* or Molucca Bean, a tropical nut carried on the Gulf Stream to the western shores of the Outer Hebrides, cherished for its powers in protecting women in childbirth. This particular object “has been in the family for many generations perhaps for many centuries and has always been prized as a precious heirloom”. Some seventeen years later, Carmichael reconstructed her speech to him as follows:

An unbaptised child cannot be harmed in a house where this bean is, no woman can be harmed while wearing it, and nor will a house where it is go on fire. I wouldn't give the bean to my only daughter, and nor would I sell it for a hundred golden guineas, although I am so foolish as to give it to you because of the love myself and Hector feel towards you. This blessed bean was blessed on the altar by the priest and in the eyes of God and the people it is sacred. A boat in danger of being wrecked wouldn't be wrecked were she carrying this bean. No misfortune shall ever strike a woman who wears it. [...] May the woman you get have a long life, may she enjoy good fortune, and may she keep the precious beloved bean very carefully.⁹

The final statement might perhaps indicate why Mrs. MacIsaac had made her gift.

It appears that two months previously, on 12 August 1867, during a trip to the lighthouse of Ceann Bharraigh at the very southern

⁹ “Cha bhaolaichte leana gun bhaiste aig taigh am bitheadh an Arna so, cha bhaolaichte bean mu m bitheadh e agus cha mhu reachadh taigh am bitheadh i ri theine [Baol = accident, mishap]. Cha tugain de m’ aon nighinn an Earna agus ion cha tugain eir ceud gini oir i ged tha mi cho gorach agus gu bheil mi ga toirt duibhse leis a ghaol tha agam fhein agus aig Eachann oirbh. Chaidh an Arna bheannaichte so a bheannachadh air an altair leis an t-sagairt agus ann an suilean Dhia agus dhaoine tha i naomh. Ged bhitheadh eathar an cunnart dol a dhi cha rea’adh i dhi ach an arna so bhi innte. Cha tig baol air bean gu brath air am bith i. [...] Gu ma buan an te gheibh sibh agus gu n robh piseach air a ceann agus gu math curamach a gheibheas i an Arna phriseil ghaolach” (CW MS 87, fols. 16^v–17). All translations are the present writer’s own unless otherwise stated.

extremity of the Outer Hebrides, Carmichael had met Mary Frances Macbean (1837–1928), the woman who was to become his wife. If so, it was a whirlwind courtship: the couple would marry in Edinburgh on 13 January the following year.¹⁰ The Molucca bean was thus Anna MacIsaac’s wedding present to Alexander Carmichael. The bean did not come by itself, however; it had an invocation attached, although Mrs. MacIsaac herself described the item as a *laoidh* or hymn:

See, o Mary, the woman
On the brink of death.
See her, o Son,
For you are able
To give the infant his power
And to make the woman well.
and others: To give the infant justice
others: To give the infant power.¹¹

This is to be said three times placing the Tearn a to the lips and then in the hand of the parturient woman who presses it hard in the palm of her hand while the child is being born (CW MS 87, fols. 17^{r-v}).

Given the importance of Mary Frances Carmichael’s later charity work in furnishing Carmichael with access to some of his best informants

¹⁰ The family tradition of the place of their first meeting, as retailed by Carmichael’s grandson James Carmichael Watson and derived from “old people in Barra and Uist [CG IV, xlii], may be undermined by a love poem in Carmichael’s hand to an absent “Mary”, apparently dating to 1865, in CW MS 105, fol. 18^v, although the poem (or indeed the name of his sweet-heart within it!) may well be a later interpolation.

¹¹ “Faic a Mhoire a bhean
Us i eir fòd a bhais
Faic fein i a Mhic
O ’s ann agad a tha
A chomas a thoirt dha’n leana
Agus a bhean a bhith slan. et
al. Ceartas a thoirt dha’n leana
al. Comas a thoir dhan leana.”

from the very poorest stratum of island society—such interactions effectively initiating him into a particular *gift economy* and so giving him the opportunity to gather examples of the genre—it is both amusing and revealing to see how their relationship enabled him to gain access to charm performances even before they were wed. Again, bearing in mind Alexander Carmichael’s extensive “recreation” of such invocations in his *Carmina Gadelica* volumes, it is telling that the very first item of the genre that he recorded came with variants.

Anna MacIsaac went on to give Carmichael a charm, which she called *An Eàrr-Thalmhainn* or “The Yarrow”, although there is no mention of the plant in the text:

I shall come today, the Father,
The Son and the Holy Spirit.
I shall come with God and God will come with me
God and Mary and Michael
From the top of my head
To the heel of my sole
Let me come with my reputation
Let me go with my right [testimony?]
Christ, ?stand up for me.¹²

The item is in fact a simple, all-purpose protective invocation; one suspects that Mrs. MacIsaac had in fact confused it with another Gaelic charm type specifically relating to yarrow.¹³ From an appended note,

¹² “Thigeams an diugh an t-Athair
Am Mac agus an Spiorad Naomh.
Thigeams le Dia ’s thig Dia liom
Dia ’s Moire ’s Micheil
O mhullach [*supra*: ire] mo chinn
Gu sàlach [*supra*: iocar] mo bhonn—bhuinn
Thigeam le mo chliu
Falbham le mo dheas [*pencil*: (theas?)]
A Chriosda dean mo seas[?amh]”
(CW MS 87, fol. 18).

¹³ The reference to yarrow is omitted in the published version of the text, *Thigeam an diugh / Come I this day* in CG I, 68–9. For yarrow charms, see *ibid.*, II, 70–1, 94–5; VI, 66.

we might surmise that she recited it to Carmichael because of a particular divinatory purpose associated with love: whether the plant's flowers are open or shut early in the morning determines whether the charmer's sweetheart will be faithful or not. A further note, however, seems to allude to the original purpose of the charm: intoning the words would apparently prepare and equip the reciter to undertake other, perhaps more weighty prognostics, to find out whether a lost person or beast might be recovered. If, as appears to be the case, Mrs. MacIsaac was alluding to the art of the *frìth* or divination, yarrow flowers were only one of a whole series of signs that could be interpreted by the knowledgeable.¹⁴

Carmichael's interest was clearly piqued by the charms that Anna MacIsaac had given him. From the manuscript transcription of the session, it is clear that she was persuaded to give him a series of four charms to protect cattle: *Eòlas an Tairbhein*, probably against warble fly; *Eòlas a' Bhun-Deirg*, against Red Water Disease, *Eòlas na Ruaidh*, against rose or erysipelas, *Eòlas an t-Sniòmh*, the familiar "Bone-to-Bone Charm"—the implication being, of course, that she was an active charmer (CW MS 87, fols. 18^v–19). By the time that the recording session had ended, Alexander Carmichael had noted six items, almost as many vernacular charm texts as had been written down in Scottish Gaelic during the previous three centuries.

He does not, however, seem to have pursued the genre. During the next two years he would record only one more charm, a *Eòlas an Déididh* or charm against toothache, apparently from Alexander MacDonald (c. 1822–1894), farm grieve (overseer or manager) at Driomor, South Uist:

The charm Bride put
 In the thumb of the [mother] of God
 For venom, for worm,
 For toothache in the teeth of her head,
 Hell under my tooth, and a tooth of hell in my head.

¹⁴ Carmichael recorded another *frìth* charm, on an unspecified date, from Barbara MacPhee (c. 1799–1880), Dreumasdail, South Uist: CW MS 87, fol. 15.

As long as I myself shall last,
May my tooth last in my head.¹⁵

The next significant group of charms that Carmichael recorded were collected in rather striking circumstances, during what was ostensibly a botched session exposing the limits of his competence and authority as a fieldworker. On 8 May 1869 he met, for what appears to be the only time, Isabella or Iseabail Chisholm (c. 1805–1885), a traveller originally from Strathglass on the mainland. Itinerant travellers (*luchd-siubhail*), disparagingly referred to as *ceàrdannan* or tinkers, formed a stratum of island society more or less invisible to the bureaucracy that Carmichael represented in his position as exciseman. Iseabail, however, was a well-known island character, “a stately woman with a huge Roman Nose [...] a virago of whom most people were afraid, especially superstitious people, for Isabel was ready to curse on any occasion if one crossed her” (CW MS 133A, fol. 133). Carmichael’s somewhat laconic description of her at the end of a series of transcriptions in his *Notebook No. IV* as being “of confused mind and memory” (CW MS 7, fol. 39) would seem to underplay what actually happened, if contemporary island gossip, as related more than half a century later by the Rev. Angus MacDonald of Killearnan (1858–1932), is to be believed:

Isabel was full of old lore and knew many old Catholic hymns which she was supposed to have learned at Strathglas[s]. Carmichael scented her and made arrangements to have her tapped. He made an appointment with her to come to his house one morning for the purpose of taking down some of the hymns. Isabel duly appeared and the first thing Carmichael did was to go

¹⁵ “An or a chuir Bride
Ann an ordag mna Dhé
Air ghnoith air chnoith
Air dheideadh air dheudadh a cinn
Ifrine fo m dheud s deud ifrinn am cheann
S fhad sas mairean mi fhein
Gum mari mo dheud am cheann”
(CW MS 107, fol. 59^v [7 Apr 1869]).

to a press and take out of it the largest glass he could find which filling it to the brim he handed it to the old lady. He soon discovered that he gave the dram at the wrong end. Isabel soon began to show symptoms of inebriety and would not know a Catholic hymn from the Reel of Tulloch. Carmichael never saw her again. She died soon after and no Strathglas[s] hymns grace the pages of “*Carmina Gadelica*” (CW MS 133A, fol. 133^v).

Whatever *hymns* Carmichael had intended to record from Iseabail Chisholm, he ended up noting down from her a series of charms, most of them against evil eye. Four survive in transcripts, while a further three texts ascribed to her are only found in printed versions in *Carmina Gadelica* (CW MS 7, fols. 35v and 39; CG II, 44–51 and 154–7). One of the latter is an example of a malefic charm, a most unusual occurrence in the recorded corpus. Although the printed version has unmistakably been embellished, the flavour of her exuberantly creative cursing remains, the particular flying style of a woman well remembered by the Rev. Angus MacDonald:

She was then an old woman—cursing an absent person kneeling on one knee. The words she used were awful. The person in question was to be at the mercy of the Devil who was invoked to roast well (CW MS 133A, fol. 133).

Given that seventeen years previously Iseabail Chisholm and her sister had been apparently unjustly sentenced to a year’s imprisonment following an incident involving illegal whisky, while her brother-in-law had been transported to Australia never to return, she may well have had good reason for cursing an officer of Her Majesty’s Excise.¹⁶

It would be over a year before Carmichael recorded another charm, a version of the childbirth invocation met with earlier, acquired seemingly in passing from Marion MacQueen (c. 1791–1880) in Miosadar on the island of Tarasagh off the west coast of Harris:

¹⁶ National Archives of Scotland (West Register House), Edinburgh, JC26/1852/10; also AD14/53/298; JC26/1853/68; this is the same case referred to by Alec John Williamson in Neat 1996, 44 and 48, and Neat 2000, 224–7.

See, O Mary, the woman on the brink of death,
 See her, O Son, for you are [able]:
 “The child will be accepted
 And she herself will be well.”¹⁷

Originally from North Uist, Marion MacQueen had been nurse to the children of John MacDonald, tacksman of the island (see Lawson 1997b, 30 and 33–4; Lawson 2002, 47; Lawson 2004, 169–70). The charm was surely part of the lore of her vocation, and it is surely no coincidence that Carmichael’s wife Mary was at the time of recording—probably 8 July 1870—only a month away from giving birth to their second child Ella (1870–1928).

The relative paucity of charm texts recorded by Alexander Carmichael during his first five years living in the Outer Hebrides might lead us to question just how conspicuous the use of charms in island communities actually was. We should also bear it in mind that in some local circles Carmichael remained something of an outsider, and a public figure to boot, mistrusted by many islanders as a representative of state bureaucracy, an interfering *gàidsear* or exciseman—not to mention living at the time in the local minister’s manse at Truimeasgearraidh. Thus, perhaps, the uncharacteristic excitement with which Carmichael recorded his next discovery concerning charms:

Extraordinary. While travelling along the road today—Friday the 5th July [*recte* August] 1870—I overtook a woman who told me that she had a cold very poorly and that she could not understand the nature of her illness—diseased. Ultimately she confided to me that she had just been away at a “wisewoman” getting a *snaile* made for the cure of her cow. The wise woman told my friend that 2 or 3 per[sons] put an eye in the cow. Bu leoir a h-aon’s cha ionadh i bhi fo ghealai crai [one would be enough, and it’s not surprising she (the cow) is in such agony] said the owner reli-

¹⁷ “Faic a Mhoire bhean us i eir fòd a bhais
 Faic fein i mhic san agad a tha
 ‘Bi an leanabh air a ghabhail
 S bi i fhein slan” (CW MS 116, fol. 6).

giously believing her witch friends. She got 2 *Snailles* which she kindly showed me each about 6 or 9 inches long and twisted of natural dusky brow[n] wool. This is the colour *ciar* for brutes and scarlet for human beings. The woman witch des[ired] her to put on the shorter first and to put it [*supra*: hide] na h-earubal [the tail] where it would not be seen & if not efficacious to put [*supra*: in] the longer which would [be] for certain efficacious. Her *snaile* is made with much mystery and secrecies dipt in some mystery water saliva &c and incantations said over it. Some [*supra*: ecclesiastics] here are not proof ag[ains]t the *snaile* and I have heard of some upon whose cattle the *snaile* was put if not at their request at least with their sanctions (CW MS 116, fols. 32^v–33).

The following December Carmichael recorded from John Pearson (1814–1885), a cottar (and veteran of the American Confederate Army) in Ceann Tangabhal in the southern isle of Barra, another protective charm-cum-curse against evil eye, *Eòlas Beum Shùl*:

Let me make for you a charm against the eye
 From the breast of holy Patrick
 Against neck swelling, against tail stopping,
 Against nine [?] plagues and nine [?] murrains,
 And against nine slender fairy women.
 If it is from the eye of a man, may [he] burn up like pitch,
 If it is from the eye of a woman, may she be without her breast.
 May a cold [?] sterility and coldness of blood
 Affect her cattle, her sheep,
 Her people and her possessions.¹⁸

¹⁸ “Dianaieinse duitsa eolas eir suil
 A uc ’Ille Phadruig naoimh
 Eir at a’aich us eir stad earbail
 Eir naoi conneir [*supra*, in a later hand: connait] ’s air naoi conachair
 ’S eir naoi [*supra*: naodha] bean seanga sith
 Ma’s a suil fir i, i a lasadh ma bhi
 Mas a suil mnai i, i bhith dh-easbhui a cich
 Falcadair fuar agus fuarac da fuil
 Eir a crodh, eir a caoirich
 Eir a daoine ’s eir a cuid” (CW MS 7, fol. 17^v [Dec 1870]; cf. CG II, 332).

John Pearson's sister Catherine (1807–1880), nicknamed *the Witch*, was and remains notorious in her native island for her mastery of the black arts, powers most spectacularly demonstrated in her successfully cursing five sons of a neighbouring family with whom she had fallen out to deaths by drowning. While Carmichael recorded a number of songs from Catherine Pearson, it is striking that, although she undoubtedly worked with charms, she gave him none of her store (Macneil 2008a, 47).

For three years almost all the charms Alexander Carmichael had encountered were protective ones against evil eye. Although the incidence may merely reflect his specific collecting interests at the time, it appears rather probable that this charm type was in fact predominant in the islands. But this is certainly not the impression given by Carmichael in *Carmina Gadelica*. Even though at least 23 items of the 72 texts gathered in the second volume as *Uibe* or “Incantations” deal specifically with evil eye, Carmichael chose to emphasise the positive herbal healing charms in his collection—even, one suspects, playing down the *rôle* ascribed to evil eye in causing the illnesses in the first place. Robert Craig MacLagan's 1902 survey *Evil Eye in the Western Highlands* might serve as a useful corrective, offering us a portrait of contemporary Gaelic society in which charms functioned as much to hurt as to heal. In *Carmina Gadelica*, on the other hand, the most prominent of Carmichael's texts are individualist in focus, asocial, and deprived of any reference to the structures through which supernatural power was explained and interpreted within communities where maleficent intent was familiar and expected.

Charms as Newspaper Curiosities, 1871–1872

At the end of 1871 an opportunity arose for Alexander Carmichael not just to collect charms, but to transmit them to a wider audience. The Rev. Alexander Stewart (1829–1901) of Onich in Argyllshire wrote an occasional column in the weekly *Inverness Courier* newspaper under the pen-name “Nether-Lochaber”, offering his readers miscellaneous observations on natural history, antiquities, anecdotes, customs, and curiosities. From September 1871 he began to mine a productive lode that attracted much interest from his readers, printing a series of Gaelic riddles and other linguistic curiosities together with English transla-

tions. Among these was a healing charm “taken down for us a short time ago by a gentleman in a neighbouring district from the recitation of an old woman on his property. It bears internal evidence of being intended for use only in the case of sprains, bruises, and dislocations:”

He that rode with dignity
On the fine young ass that was handsome;
Who healed every wound and plague,
And restored the sick to health;
He healed the blind man’s eyes,
And made a level path for the crippled man;
With Peter and Paul, with Mary, blessed woman,
May [He] be near now, to heal the bones and sinews.
Rubbing and spittle and Saint Columba’s wort
(In the name of the Father),
Rubbing and spittle and Saint Columba’s wort
(In the name of the Son),
Rubbing and spittle and Saint Columba’s wort
(In the name of the Holy Ghost),
Rubbing and spittle and a kiss from the lips—
Amen!¹⁹

¹⁹ “Esan a mharcaich gu stòld’,
Air an asail dheas òg a bha grinn;
A leighis gach creuchd ’s gach plàigh,
’S a dh-aisig gu slaint’ na bha tinn;
Leighis E sùilean an doill,
Do’n bhacach rinn rathad réidh;
Le Peadair ’s le Pàl, ’s le Muire bean àigh,
Biodh dlu an drasd’, a leigh[e]as nan cnamh ’s nam féith’.
Suathadh a’s sile a’s luibh Challam-chille
(’An ainm an Athair),
Suathadh a’s sile a’s luibh Challam-chille
(’An ainm a Mhic),
Suathadh a’s sile a’s luibh Challam-chille
(’An ainm an Spioraid Naoimh),
Suathadh a’s sile a’s pòg ’o bhilibh –
Amen!”

“Nether-Lochaber”, *Inverness Courier*, 9 Nov 1871, 3; translation by Stewart himself. *Luibh Chalum Chille* is St. John’s wort.

Some seven months later, when the interest in riddles had run its course, Stewart published another four charms, probably from west Argyllshire where his own parish was situated: *Rann Galar nan Sìl* ("A Rhyme for Sore Eyes"), *Eòlas air a' Ghréim-Mhionaich* ("A Charm for the Colic"); *Eòlas an t-Sníomh* ("A Charm for a Sprain": again, the popular "Bone-to-Bone Charm"), and *Eòlas an Tairbhein* ("A Charm for the *Tairbhean*").²⁰ Like riddles, charms were curiosities ideally suited for the short newspaper column, guaranteed to attract interest among the local readership and further afield.

Carmichael certainly knew the Rev. Alexander Stewart. Not only did the minister's present parish border that of Appin and Lismore, in which Carmichael had been brought up, but he had been born in Benbecula in the Outer Hebrides, where his father had been one of Carmichael's predecessors in the excise (Scott et al., 1915–, IV, 129). Already one of Stewart's best correspondents, Carmichael's attention must have been caught by the cattle charm, similar to the one that he had recorded from Anna MacIsaac some five years previously. He sent in three charms, which were printed by Stewart over two columns: firstly, *Rann Leigheas Galar Cruidh*, "A Rhyme for Healing Cattle Disease," probably collected the previous year from Mary Stewart *née* MacPherson (1824–1898), Màiri Bhreac, from the township of Malacleit, North Uist. The informant was described as "an honest, unsophisticated, old *Banarach* or dairymaid in North Uist, who is even yet occasionally consulted about sickly cows."²¹ In other words, Mary

²⁰ Ibid., 20 Jun 1872, 3. For their provenance, see *ibid.*, 1 Aug 1872: "Evidently the latter [Carmichael's *Eòlas an Tairbhein*] is only an insular version of the *Tairbhean* rhyme that appeared in the *Courier* of the 20th June." For *tairbhean* and its variants, see CG II, 367 and 372; IV, 285–99.

²¹ "Nether-Lochaber", *Inverness Courier*, 4 Jul 1872, 3. The equivalent piece in CG ii, 58–9, is attributed to Màiri Bhreac, and the ascription is made more certain by the fact that she definitely did contribute another cattle charm to Carmichael, printed in the subsequent newspaper column. Carmichael may have been adding journalistic colour in describing a woman not yet fifty as an "old *Banarach*"; on the other hand, Angus Macmillan has observed to me that the harsh effects of work and weather tended to make islanders, especially women, appear older in the eyes of outsiders than they really were.

Stewart was herself an active charmer. Carmichael would record from her again before he left the Uists.²²

Christ and his Apostle and John
Those three of most excellent glory
That ascended to make supplication [i.e., charms]
Through the gateway of the city,
Fast by the right knee of God's own Son.
As regards evil-eyed women;
As regards blighting-eyed men;
As regards swift-speeding elf-arrows;
Two to strengthen and renovate the joints,
And three to back [these two] as sureties—
The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost,
To four-and-twenty diseases are the reins of man and best [subject];
God utterly extirpate, sweep away, and eradicate them
From out thy blood and flesh, thy bones and marrow,
And as Christ uplifted its proper foliage
To the extremities of the branches on each tree top,
So may He uplift from off and out of thee,
Each [evil] eye, each frowning look, malice and envy,
From this day forth to the world's last day. Amen.²³

²² It should be noted that CW MS 494, fols. 334–6, printed in CG IV, 172–5, is supposedly the later transcript of a charm against evil eye, *Oba ri Shùl*, ascribed to a Mary Matheson of Malacleit, North Uist, and dated 17 March 1871. The suspiciously ornate nature of the text and its similarity to the *Rann Leighis Galar Cruidh* recorded from Màiri Bhreac, as well as the fact that no such individual as Mary Matheson appears in the district in the 1871 census, might lead us to have doubts about the charm's authenticity.

²³ “Criosd’ ’us Ostail ’us Eoin
An triuir sin is binne gloir
A dh-èirich a dheanada na h-òra,
Roimh dhorus na Cathrach,
No air glun deas Mhic De.
Air na mnathan múr-shuileach,
Air na feara geur-shuileach
'S air na saighdean sìtheadach;
Dithis a' lasachadh alt agus ga 'na adhachadh
Agus triuir a chuireas mi 'an urra riu sin,

And from the misfortune of every pitfall;
Gentle Saint Bride to thy care I commend them,
Saint Mary do thou restore them to me in safety;
With the confidence of cattle under the care of God
and St. Columba,
Put your feet [fearlessly] under you,
A safe pathway [bridge] being provided for you by the
Blessed Virgin.²⁴

These charms evidently attracted some interest, to the extent that the entire column was reprinted in the *Glasgow Herald* two days later.²⁵

For Carmichael, the occasion to supply Stewart with charms had come at an opportune moment. In summer of 1871 he and his young family had left the manse at Trumaisgearraidh, moving firstly to an t-Ìochdar at the north end of South Uist, and then, towards the end of the following year, to Creag Goraigh in the Isle of Benbecula, in a bungalow strategically close to the inn where islanders would wait until the ford over to South Uist was safe to cross. In these overwhelmingly Catholic districts vernacular blessings, prayers, and charms were much more openly performed than in the Protestant north. Carmichael's new circumstances had spurred his interest in popular piety in all its forms; indeed, during his first year among Catholic tenantry he

²⁴ "Cuiridh mise 'n spréidh so romham
Mar a dh-òrduich Rìgh an Domhain,
Muire ga'n gleidheadh o fheith' nan coimheach;
Air thùs a Bhride mhin bi mariu,
Le d' bhata 's le d' lorg bi rompa
'S gun glacadh tu ciabh as d' fhalt,
O rinn thu dhuibh eolas 'as earail,
Gan gleidheadh o chall 's o lochd,
O bhathadh, an oilt 's o gharadh cam,
Na o mhilleadh sluic;
A Bhride mhin fagam h-agad,
Muire tilleadh thugam,
Le luas Dhia 's Chillum-Chille
Casan cuiribh fothaibh
'S drochaid Mhuire romhaibh" (ibid., 1 Aug 1872, 3).
Translation as printed.

²⁵ "Celtic Incantations", *Glasgow Herald*, 3 Aug 1872, 3.

recorded some seventeen items relating to popular spirituality and calendar customs, considerably more than what he had gathered of this type during the previous seven years.

Carmichael's relocation surely gave him the opportunity to review his folklore collection, as well as allowing him more space in which to work. In addition, rightly or wrongly, he felt that his collecting had now exhausted the supply of long traditional tales, the more so in that the best of the older generation of his first informants were now dying off. Carmichael's own faith in the authenticity of James Macpherson's Ossianic epics had been badly shaken by the publication of his erstwhile patron John Francis Campbell's debunking collection *Leabhar na Féinne* in 1872. In addition, given that his onerous official duties were now combined with a young family to look after and building work to supervise, it was clearly more convenient for Carmichael to record short items such as songs and charms, rather than long narratives.

In fact, Carmichael may have increasingly come to believe that the soul of the culture was not to be found in the epic prose tales tailored for public recitation so celebrated among other contemporary folklore collectors. Indeed, the rest of his collecting career may be read as a reaction against the public, epic, masculine rhetoric of a "martial race", almost from the rough materials of an embryonic national literature, to the private, the personal, the spiritual. Having dwelt among the people of Uist for a number of years, and having won a measure of trust, he was now in the unusual position of being able to gather private and personal lore, the reciters of which "were more rare and reticent" (CG i, xxxii; cf. *ibid.*, iii, 48–9). Much of this material, of course, was possessed by women, and the evident attractiveness of this enthusiastic, candid, ingenuous and above all sympathetic folklore collector to the opposite sex should not be overlooked (see Kenneth MacLeod, "Our interpreter," CG IV, xxx–xxxii and xxxiii).

Not only did the *Inverness Courier* newspaper columns clearly spur Carmichael on to collect other charms, but the fact that one of the charms that he gathered, *Eòlas an Tairbhein*, was a longer version of a text printed by Stewart must have drawn his attention to the existence of variants, and suggested the possibility of tracking down or even reconstructing putative originals. On his next visit to the island of Barra in September, he once again visited John Pearson. Among the many items that he noted down were two rather odd items, *Eòlas Sgéith*

It is not a love charm for you
But to draw water in a straw,
The warmth of him you love
With love to come upon you.
Rise up early on Sunday
And go to the flat rock of the shore
Take with you “beannachd pobail” [?butterbur]
And “currag sagairt” [?monkshood].
A few cinders
In the bottom of your petticoat,
Three bones of an old man
Taken out of a grave
And nine strong snares of horsehair.
Burn that on a brushwood fire
And make of it all ashes.
Sprinkle that about the breast of your lover
 against the north wind
And I shall pledge and warrant you
That man will never leave you.²⁶

26 “Cha’n eolas gradhaich dhuit
Ach uisge thra na thop [chop?]
Blas an fhir thig rut
Le ghradh a tharuinn orst
Eirich moch Didon[aich]
S therid gu lic chonarst chlad[aich]
Thoir leat bean[nachd] pobuil
Agus currac sagairt
Deannan beagan ghriosaidh
Ann an iocar do bhadain
3 chraun sean duine
Air an tar[raing] a uai
S 9 goisneanun cruai roinne
Loisg siod eir crian theine
S dean gu leir dhe lua
Crath siod ma bhrollach do

Given that the two plants mentioned, *beannachd pubaill* and *currag sagairt*, were in Uist at least quite unknown outside oral sources, we might suspect that this item functioned as a curio rather than a practical attempt to influence the course of love. Carmichael must have been taken with it, as he recorded a shorter variant the following month, on 29 October, from Angus Currie (1787–1877), Àird na Mòine, an t-Ìochdar (CW MS 106, fol. 33). The previous day, Angus's son Archibald Currie (1821–1896) had given him a religious song, two evening blessings, two versions of *Rann Buachailleachd*, charms to protect cattle closely related to the *Òra Gléidheadh Spréidhe* that Carmichael had earlier collected from Mary Stewart, with a note that “Old women used to say this in driving away their cows in the mor[n]ing”, the use of *Achlasan Chaluim Chille* or St. John's Wort to protect milk from evil eye, and an enumeration ritual for warts (*ibid.*, fols. 32–3).²⁷ Within two days Carmichael had collected three variants of charm types that he had already recorded, evidence of a growing interest in recreating Urtexts of charms.²⁸

The following year, taken up with work duties, family circumstances, and a new house at Creag Goraidh whose rebuilding he had to supervise, offered Carmichael few opportunities for recording.²⁹ Only one charm dates from this year, a version of *Eòlas na Ruaidh*, “The Charm for Rose”, recorded from weaveress Anna O'Henley (b. c. 1816), Baghasdail fo Thuath, South Uist, herself an active charmer,

leannain an a'aidh ga[oth] [*supra*: na] tua

S their mis an ra sam barantas

Nach falbh am fear sin uait” (CW MS 90, fols. 37^v–8 and 40). See Campbell 2005, 218, 482.

²⁷ Despite an apparent anomaly concerning Archibald's age, the family would appear to be the one recorded in Lawson 1991, 73. See also the “Nether-Lochaber” column in the *Inverness Courier*, 28 Nov 19872.

²⁸ In addition to those listed above, also dated to 1872 is an obviously “improved” and greatly expanded *Eòlas Leighis*, a “healing charm” ascribed to Mary MacMillan (c. 1823–1882), Lianacuith, an t-Ìochdar: CW MS 494, fols. 371–3. No original appears to be extant.

²⁹ See CW MS 362, fol. 163, Carmichael to Capt. F. W. L. Thomas, 14 Jan 1874: “I am ashamed to say that I have done very little during the last two years. I have been officially busy. Since we came to this cottage more than a year ago tradesmen have hardly been out of the house so that I really could do nothing more than keep up my official work.”

on 24 March 1873 (CW MS 494, fols. 400–2 (transcript), 24 March 1873; see Lawson 1997a, 54).

The reciter said that this charm was good for sore swelling in the breast of a woman, in the udder of a cow or for the dug of a mare. She herself cured women and cows and mares through the means of this charm and many times. The rune has to be said three times over the place affected in the name of the three Persons of the Holy Trinity Power (CW MS 494, fol. 500, without later additions; see also CW MS 502, fol. 18).

The *Torranan* Charm, 1874

Carmichael resumed collecting charms in 1874, but in a rather unusual way. First of all, on 3 February he recorded a charm for bruises, *Eòlas Pronnaidh*, from Ronald MacDonald (c. 1799–1874), Geàrraidh na Mònadh, South Uist. On the following page of his notebook, most uncharacteristically, he writes out a neater copy of it, under the more distinctive, not to mention archaic, title *Òra Cniogain* (CW MS 111, fols. 12^v and 13). The implication of this is that Carmichael was copying out the charm while his memory of it was still fresh, in order to have the text published. Some time during the same month Carmichael can be observed trying out in a field notebook an English translation of a new charm that he must recently have acquired, evidently for another newspaper column. This was *Eòlas an Torranain*, “The Torranan Charm” (ibid., fols. 13^v–14). Carmichael’s account of how he obtained this mysterious text is narrated in two successive drafts for a paper that he wrote up in 1887 (CW MS 383, fols. 29–40 and 57).

Carmichael had paid a visit to Flora or Fionnghal MacLeod, Fionnghal nighean Tormoid, who lived across the ford from him in Càrnán, an t-Ìochdar, South Uist, and who “had snatches of old songs and sayings, superstitions and beliefs of the past which no one else had.” Fionnghal was in a bad humour. Her cow had been losing milk during the spring dearth. “She described with much animation and strong feeling a visit that she made to John Beaton, patronymically called Iain mac Fhearchair, John the son of Fearchar, to ask him to procure her the Torannan to increase the milk of her cow.” Originally

from Skye, a descendant of a celebrated medical kindred, John Beaton (c. 1785–1877) was an expert botanist, and had worked as a herd on the remote and rugged eastern side of the island. He lived nearby Fionnghal at Loch a' Chàrnain.

Beaton knew of only one place in Uist where the mysterious plant grew, on the slopes of Beinn Mhór, the highest mountain in the islands. Nevertheless, he was fully prepared to make the arduous journey to obtain it. At this point, a female relative intervened—in Carmichael's account Fionnghal nighean Tormoid describes her as Beaton's wife, although census data suggest that he was by then a widower—unnerved by the thought of him, nearly ninety years old, wandering the wilderness alone. Carmichael reconstructs and translates Fionnghal's words:

Well, "She called her harmless act a crime" and told her that her belief in the efficacy of the torannan to increase the milk of her cow was rank superstition and that if she did not desist from pressing her husband to travel such a journey for the torannan under the belief that it was a charm to procure her milk she would give her her head in her lap! "mo cheann na m' sguirt"! Wicked woman! may she die the death of the wicked! (Ibid., fols. 34–5)

Alexander Carmichael was clearly intrigued by the charm, the story behind it, and the mysterious *torannan* or *torranan* that inspired it. Shortly afterwards he collected another variant, coincidentally from another Fionnghal MacLeod, Fionnghal nighean Chaluim (c. 1805–1891), in Baile Sear, North Uist. He despatched the two to the Rev. Alexander Stewart, and they were eventually printed together, with translation, in his *Inverness Courier* column on 6 August 1874.

Let me pluck thee, Torranan!
 With all thy blessedness and all thy virtue,
 The nine blessings came with the nine parts,
 By the virtue of the Torranan.
 The hand of St. Bride with me,

I am now to pluck thee. Let me pluck thee, Torranan!
 With thine increase as to sea and land;

With the flowing tide that shall know no ebbing,
 By the assistance of the chaste St. Bride,
 The holy St. Columba directing me,
 (Gentle St. Odhran protecting me,)
 And St. Michael, of high-crested steeds,
 Imparting virtue to the matter the while,
 Darling plant of all virtue,
 I am now plucking thee!³⁰

“One of the two women,” continues Mr. Carmichael, “from whom I got this *Eolas*, said that the *Torranan* is a flowering plant which grows among rocky places in the hills, and that the *blath* or flower is large, and resembles in shape a woman’s breast, and that it is snow-white. She said the *cuach* or crop of the plant gradually fills up, *le sugh sonais*, with the dew of bliss, while the tide is flowing, and slowly dries up again during the ebbing of the tide. In order, therefore, to obtain the *buaidh* or virtue of the *Torranan*, the plant or flower—whether the whole plant, or simply the flower, I could not make out—must be procured during the flow of the tide, or near the time of high water. If you get at them, so my informant assured me only a few days ago, your cow or cows will give foaming

³⁰ “EOLAS AN TORRANAIN

Buainams’ thu ’thorranain
 Le’d uile bheannachd’s le ’d uile bhuaidh,
 Thainig na naoi sonais
 Leis na naoi earranan
 Le buaidh an torranain,
 Lamh Bhride leam!
 Tha mi ’nis ga’d bhuain.

Buaineams thu thorranain
 Le’d ’thorradh mara ’s tir,
 Ri lionadh gun tra’adh
 Led’ lamhsa Bhride mhìn,
 Colum naomh gam sheoladh
 Odhran caomh ’am dhion,
 A’s Michael nan stéud uaibhreach
 ’Cuir buaidh anns an ni
 Tha mo lus lurach a nis air a bhuain.”

quantities of milk, and your cream, butter and cheese shall be of the richest and best. You have simply to place the *Torranan* under one of your milk-pails, and while placing it there, you repeat the *Eolas* three times, making at the same time a circle sun-wise, or with the sun, also three times, with the plant over the milk vessel, repeating or chanting in a loud voice, but slowly and distinctly, the spell as I have written it. The woman herself never saw the *Torranan*. It is, she says, a rare plant, and she would given *one pound* to anyone who would show her the plant, and where it grows.”³¹

Carmichael made further investigations into this intriguing plant: on 19 September he himself visited John Beaton, where he recorded a longer version of *Eòlas an Torranain*, as well as three other unusual charms, *Eala-bhì*, *A' Chloimh-Chat*, and *Eòlas a' Chrannachain* (CW MS 7, fols. 28–9). Once more the old man was willing to make the journey to procure the plant, but “[v]isions of tottering age among the dangerous passes and death in the mountains even if we should ever get there dawned on the mind of the writer and to the great regret of the instructor and his pupil the thing was not to be thought of” (CW MS 383, fols. 38–9).

A number of interesting problems arise in connection with the *torranan* texts. Firstly, neither of the Fionnghal MacLeods who gave Carmichael his first two texts had actually seen the rare plant herself. Again, although Carmichael quotes Beaton’s charm as concerning the *torranan*, an attached note suggests that he may not actually have called it that at all:

The Torrachan was placed under the milk basin in the milk-house. Old dairy-maids had lots of gibeags [i.e. superstitions] about their milk. (J. Paton [i.e. Beaton], CW MS 7, fol. 28).

In 1877, revisiting Mary Stewart, Màiri Bhreac, in Malacleit, North Uist, Carmichael recorded another version of the charm, only this time his informant referred to the *toraman*. (CW MS 108, fol. 5). Twelve years later, in reply to a letter from Carmichael, the Rev. John Gregorson Campbell of Tiree (1834–1891) describes how he has heard “about

³¹ *Inverness Courier*, 6 Aug 1874, 3; translation as printed.

the plant *Foraman* in Skye as being fennel where fresh water falls into the sea" (CW MS 487, fols. 193–4; Campbell 2005, 678–9). Finally, a related charm that Carmichael recorded in Bunessan in the Isle of Mull from Iseabail Mackechnie (c. 1835–c. 1906), probably in the year of her death, is entitled *Am Faram* (CW MS 504C, fol. 193). Variant texts of the charm may well have been more widespread in other islands where the original plant, whatever it might have been, grew more commonly. What we have in Uist at any rate is a charm, or a cluster of charms sharing the same semantic motifs, that was never used. Whether it functioned as a curiosity, or as a social marker for its reciters, flaunting esoteric knowledge brought in from outside the local community, what is certain is that *Eòlas an Torranain*, the Torranan Charm, was hardly if ever actually practised. The *torranan* might well never have existed—the Gaelic equivalent of Odysseus's moly (CG II, 78–91, 332).³²

Nevertheless, its evocative story clearly meant a great deal to Alexander Carmichael—perhaps too much. Indeed, the enthusiasm that had impelled him to collect the variants in the first place led him grievously astray in the later editing process. According to his 1887 paper:

The few lines the writer has been able to recover of Eolas an Torannain have been recovered in fragments and have been fitted together with the same care that he has put together fragments of broken pottery recovered in mounds. There are different versions and it is difficult to decide which words to choose (CW MS 383, fols. 39–40).

Carmichael composed a virtuoso six-page discursive essay to precede the heavily worked-up *torranan* texts in *Carmina Gadelica* II, playing down the charm's protective nature against evil eye, reconfiguring it as a simple blessing, even investing it with a spurious historiola concerning the island saint Torran. Although, tellingly, John Beaton was not credited as a source for the texts, his expertise is nevertheless cited as proof both of the efficacy of the plant and also of its mysterious origins (CG II, 78–80).

³² Other texts related to the *torranan* are at CW MSS 244, fols. 39^v and 40^v, and 500, fol. 374^v. Both John Beaton and Mary Stewart came from the Isle of Skye: for the notion in the Outer Hebrides that witches were particularly prevalent in Skye, see Campbell 1997, 135; Campbell 1992, 139–40.

Final Years in Uist, 1875–1880

The focus of Carmichael's fieldwork during the following year, 1875, suggests that a renewed interest in charms was spurring him to a more systematic collection of the genre. It is notable that he began by returning to the two old women, both named Fionnghal MacLeod, who had given him *torranan* charms the previous year. On 7 April he visited Fionnghal nighean Chaluim, "Flora Malcolm's daughter", on the little island of Baile Sear, but only recorded one charm from her, *Eòlas an t-Snìomh*, the common "Bone-to-Bone Charm" (CW MS 111, fol. 20). Fionnghal nighean Chaluim was well-known as a local character (see CW MS 132A, fols. 118^v and 137^v; Glasgow University Library, MS Gen 1090/14/49; Gowans 1992, 10 and 21–2); but if she did possess a stock of charms, she was evidently unwilling to divulge them to the collector. On the same day Carmichael, nothing daunted, took down a charm against evil eye, *Òra rinn Moire*, "A Charm Mary Made", from Raghnaid Stewart (1825–1900), a close relative of Fionnghal (CW MS 111, fol. 20^v).

Three days later he visited the other Fionnghal MacLeod, Fionnghal nighean Tormoid, "Flora Norman's daughter", in Càrnán, an t-Ìochdar. He was rather more successful than he had been with her namesake, jotting down an evil eye charm, *Nì mis' an oba ri shùil*, instructions for the making and use of *uisg' airgid*, "silver water", an important *sian* or protective charm *Cuiridh mise sian a' bheatha bhuan* (I will put the *sian* of eternal life), and a brief allusion to the cattle-protecting charm *Lath dhomhs' mi dol dhan Ròimh* (One day on going to Rome) (*ibid.*, fols. 20^v–2; cf. CW MS 124, fols. 5, 6 and 8). The fact that Carmichael only bothered to record the first line of this last text demonstrates that he was already acquainted with it, whether from Fionnghal nighean Tormoid herself or from another informant. Yet no text of this charm is to be found in his field manuscripts, one further indication that the extant corpus of field recordings is incomplete.³³

³³ A transcription of a version of the charm exists on CW MS 7, fol. 30^v; cf. CW MS 124, fols. 3, 7–9.

The following month, on 20 May 1875, Carmichael recorded no less than five charms from Catherine Macintosh née Bowie (b. c. 1807), a widow living on her son's croft in Staidhle gearraidh, South Uist, who "possessed much occult lore" (CG II, 344n.10). These were a *Eòlas Ceartais*, "A Charm for Justice", *Cunntas an t-Sleamhainn*, the enumeration charm "The Counting of the Sty", *An t-Eòlas Toirbhein*, a text clearly related to the *tairbhean* charms already recorded, *Eòlas na Buidhe*, "A Charm for Jaundice", and *An Ruadh*, a charm against rose (CW MSS 87, fols. 11^v–2^v, 124, fols. 27^v and 29, 131A, fols. 413–6).

For the rest of the summer Alexander Carmichael did little recording, but the month of October saw him return to recording charms with renewed vigour, clearly with a purpose in mind. During the first part of the month he was busy locating and transcribing items, including a number of charms, from his fieldwork into the now lost *Notebook No. III*. On 13 October he returned to Catherine Macintosh to record a version of the *Galar Fual* or gravel charm (CW MS 87, fols. 14^v–15); the following day he collected another charm against evil eye, *Eòlas Beum Sìla*, from Margaret Macintosh née Campbell (c. 1828–1883), wife of Donald Macintosh, tailor, Baghasdail a Deas (CW MS 7, fol. 28).³⁴ Eight days later, on 22 October, he recorded yet another four charms and a series of herbal cures from Marion MacPhee (1823–1899), "Mòr nighean Fhrainseais", crofter at Baile Gharbhaith in Ìochdar, South Uist (*ibid.*, fols. 37^v–38^v).³⁵

1875 had been an exceptional year for collecting charm texts. Altogether Carmichael had gathered sixteen items, from seven different informants. The following year was not so productive; although he did record four vernacular prayers, no charms appear to date from 1876. With a new baby son to care for, and much of his research time

³⁴ There is no original field recording for this charm, which first appears in a transcription notebook. Carmichael may have recorded on the same occasion two other charms that he ascribes to Margaret Macintosh: a maleficent *Eòlas Beum Sìl* against those using evil eye, and *Eòlas na Creotaich* ("Horse without Power of Limb"), which seemingly only survives as a title: CW MS 124, fol. 3; CG ii, 56–7.

³⁵ *Eòlas At Chìoch* ("Charm against Swelling of the Breast"); *Bun Dearg* ("Red Water Charm"); *Eòlas Beum Sìla* ("Charm against Evil Eye"); and *Eòlas Sgiucha Féithe* ("A Charm for a Bursting Vein"), a truncated version of the "bone-to-bone" charm. See Lawson 1991, 53.

apparently taken up with the arduous task of examining and checking the many thousands of Gaelic place-names collected by the Ordnance Survey for a new series of local maps, field recording was evidently not a priority. The year 1877, however, was another remarkable one, not so much for the number of charms gathered, but rather on account of the return visit that Campbell made to Màiri Stewart, Màiri Bhreac, in Malacleit, North Uist.

Since he had moved south in 1871, Carmichael had had done very little recording in the northern districts of North Uist. Recently, however, he had been attempting to bid for a tack of the island of Bhàlaigh there, in anticipation that he might be able to renounce his excise post and devote his leisure time to arranging his collections for publication. But it was not to be; Carmichael was comprehensively outbid. A week after his disappointment, on 19 March 1877, Carmichael revisited his old acquaintance Màiri Bhreac in Malacleit, opposite Bhàlaigh. There he recorded from her nine charms: possibly her entire store as a charmer (CW MS 108, fols. 2^v–5).³⁶ As noted above, this collection included a charm for the *Toraman*, clearly an item related to the *Torranan* texts above (CW MS 108, fol. 5). Carmichael also recorded a text that he had already gathered from Màiri Bhreac six years previously: the cattle-protecting charm *Òra Gléidheadh Spréidhe*, this time referred to as *Òra na Buachailleachd*, the cattle-herding charm:

I shall drive these cattle before me
As the King of the world ordered,
Mary waiting for them, preserving her share.
Rise up, smooth Bride,
And take the comb from your hair.
Since you made them a charm without destruction
Preserving them from loss without harm
Bride, leave with me

³⁶ The episode is treated in greater detail in Stiùbhart 2008b, 551–71. The items that Carmichael recorded were the following: the divination charm *An Fhrithe*; *Òra Ceartais*, a charm for justice; *An Eàrr-Thalmhainn*, the yarrow charm; *Òr an t-Sionnaich*, a charm against foxes; *Òra na Buachailleachd*, the herding charm; *An Eàrnach*, the Fairy Wort; *Am Mòthan*, the “Mòthan”; *An Toraman*, a charm for milk.

The herding of God and St. Columba
 Never failing feet under you and the bridge of
 Mary before you,
 From cliff, from snowdrifts, from stream
 From crooked dyke or from the pit's destruction.³⁷

This appears to afford us the luxury of variant texts from the same charmer, offering us precious insights into the functionings of verbal memory: as an example, we might look at how the sound patterning of the third line is resolved into different semantic meanings in the two tellings. Nevertheless, the variant *chir* (comb) for *chiabh* (tress) for one might best be explained by Carmichael's improved understanding of the local Gaelic dialect, the speaker's own idelect, and generic charm motifs in general over the years since he had last recorded Màiri Bhreac.

Eleven days later Alexander Carmichael recorded another two charms connected with livestock, a *Rann Àirigh* or Shieling Rhyme, and a *Rann Spréidh* or Cattle Rhyme, a short variant of the common cattle-herding charm, both from John MacInnes (c. 1805–1894), Iain mac Phàdraig, *Staidhle gearraidh* (ibid., fols. 9^v–10, 24^v; cf. Carmichael 1884, 478). The following year he left the Hebrides for a post on the mainland in Oban, in order to ensure a better education for his

³⁷ “Cuirì mise spreì so romham
 Mar a dh'ord[aich] Rì an domh[ain]
 Muir ga feth[eamh] a glei an coidead
 Eirich thus a Bhride mhin
 Gun glaca tu chir as t-fhalt.
 O rinn thu dhaibh eolas gun eanra
 Ga'n glei o chall gun loc
 Bride fagam agam
 Buach[ailleachd] Dhe agus C[haluim]-chille
 Casa-cura fothaibh s drochaid
 muire romhaibh
 O chreig o chabhan o allt
 O ghara cam no a mhille sluic.”
 Casacurra = never failing feet (ibid., fol. 4).
 Reading *gun eanra* is uncertain: maybe *gun eanradh*, “without destruction”.
 I have followed Carmichael (CG i, 274) in translating *o chabhan* as “from snowdrifts”, but the alternative “from mountain passes” (*o chadhan*) may better fit the sense.

children. Although Carmichael would return to North Uist in 1880 for another two years, his research during this period focused upon land customs and landholding rights. Seemingly only one charm dates from this last interlude in the Outer Hebrides, *Eòlas a' Chrannachain*, "A Charm for Churning", recorded from Margaret MacDonald (1802–1894), Hoghagearraidh, North Uist, on 25 November 1880 (CW MS 7, fol. 36).³⁸

Despite the fact that during his final years in Uist Carmichael recorded few charm texts, his interest in and appreciation of the genre continued unabated. In a draft reply to a letter concerning folklore printed in *The Highlander* newspaper in 1881, Carmichael begins by mentioning his work collecting charms:

Charms—I have taken down many charms and incantations up and down these islands. Some of these I communicated to "Nether Lochaber" who in his own captivating manner has published them in the *Inverness Courier*.

I have always thought that a faithful account of these charms and incantations would be interesting, and, properly considered, mayhap instructive. I have not hitherto however, felt myself equal to the task congenial to me of giving them to the public, although many scores, if not hundreds of them, lie scattered up and down my manuscripts among masses of other rubbish.

I am not myself superstitious, beyond perhaps the latent superstition inherent I believe to every Highlander. Nevertheless, down to a friendly feeling for the believers and users of these charms and cinantations. Literally,

"We have been friends together
In sunshine and in shade."

For when a cold world would frown upon our "dark doings"
under the shade of the house and the darker shade of the

³⁸ In *Carmina Gadelica*, Carmichael ascribes two undated charms, *Eòlas na Budha* ("Charm for Jaundice") and *Eòlas a' Mheirbhein* ("The Indigestion Spell") to Angus MacEachen (c. 1814–1890), herdsman, Staoinebrig, South Uist: CG II, 12–3 and 138–9.

smoke within we would betake ourselves to the friendly shelter of a hillock outside and there, “air chuil gaoith agus air aodan greine”—behind the wind and in front of the sun, we would write down our “mystical lore” unmolested. These mystical beliefs and observances with their hoary origin far back the stream of time, probably contain interest possibly wisdom, had we only the industry of the bee to seek and extract their treasures (CW MS 230, fol. 176 [3 Dec 1881]).

If not “many scores”, far less hundreds, Alexander Carmichael had nevertheless managed to collect at least sixty specific charm texts during his time in the Uists, as well as numerous other prayers and blessings: a remarkable store. Barely a year after drafting the piece above, Carmichael had left the islands for good, moving to a new excise post in Edinburgh. His charm collecting would continue; indeed, it was entering a new phase. Henceforth, however, he would either do fieldwork during summer expeditions or else through correspondents.

Conclusion

Alexander Carmichael’s charm-collecting experiences as related in his manuscripts suggest a number of disparate reasons why some early folklorists might turn to gathering and indeed publishing examples of the genre. In this regard, it should be remembered that for all the apparent happenstance that put him in the way of that particular stratum of island tenantry who possessed and used charms, such coincidences arose as a result of the assiduous work and extensive, onerous travels that he undertook throughout the islands both as exciseman and as folklore collector. Again, Carmichael’s contacts in journalism allowed him to grasp and respond to the potential appeal of the charm genre for a wider literate, English-speaking, urban audience—the first step towards the creation of *Carmina Gadelica*.

The continuing controversy over the authenticity of Alexander Carmichael’s printed texts in *Carmina Gadelica* has severely impeded, even paralysed, the progress of Scottish Gaelic charms scholarship. The discovery and, it is to be hoped, forthcoming publication of many

of his original fieldwork notes should help to resolve these particular interpretative issues, furnishing charms scholars with a significant corpus of texts for analysis and cross-cultural comparison. But Carmichael's papers do not only consist of the items themselves, together with accompanying rituals and felicity conditions; they also incorporate a wealth of detail concerning informants, and even the particular circumstances of collection. Taken as a whole, his writings allow us to formulate hypotheses concerning processual aspects of charm collecting and indeed the varying functions of charms, at any rate within particular Hebridean island communities in the second half of the nineteenth century.

A review of Carmichael's recordings and associated texts rather undermines the belief that fieldwork, subject as it is to the mundane vagaries, the personal idiosyncrasies, and the sheer good or bad fortune ubiquitous in the muddles of everyday life, can ever be entirely systematic. It reminds us that sometimes apparently variant readings might best be ascribed to misunderstandings on the collector's part, whilst apparent biases within the corpus may be due as much to the fieldworker's interests and preconceptions as to the culture itself. It suggests that in certain areas at least, in particular periods, charm texts might be rather more protean than we sometimes give them credit for, not so highly context-dependent as we might suppose, performed for different functions on different occasions by different people. Sometimes, as with the so-called *yarrow* charm that Carmichael recorded from Anna MacIsaac, the charmer herself might misunderstand and misapply the charm. Carmichael's own case draws attention to the trouble that the collector takes in preparing, translating, explaining and contextualising charms for the outside world, for the world of print, as well as how, shorn of their healing authority, charms can assume particular new values, powers and referents during their transmission into the world republic of letters. A suspicion remains that some perhaps more entrepreneurial charmers might themselves follow the same dynamic strategies as the literate fieldworker in collecting, collating and polishing their own verbal charms, and doubtless any accompanying ritual procedures, not for an outside readership, but for their own clientele, and maybe even for their own professional satisfaction.

Charms are formal performance narratives, but like all such narratives they need not always be employed in such a way, even though

undeniably maintaining their affective weight as healing or protecting words. Within the complex, allusive web of oral culture binding a community together, with its different registers, different intentionalities and different narrative authorities, charms can function not just in the context in which they are intended, but also in a wider social framework, as shared reference points or as particular social markers, as playful child lore, as curiosities to be debated and argued over. Sometimes charms don't only heal or protect; indeed, sometimes they don't only charm.

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Statistical Appendix

CARMICHAEL'S CHARM INFORMANTS 1865–1882

<i>Decade of birth</i>	<i>Number of informants</i>	<i>Number of charms from cohort</i>
1781–1790	2 (10%)	6 (10%)
1791–1800	3 (14%)	3 (5%)
1801–1810	6 (29%)	24 (41%)
1811–1820	3 (14%)	6 (10%)
1821–1830	7 (33%)	19 (33%)

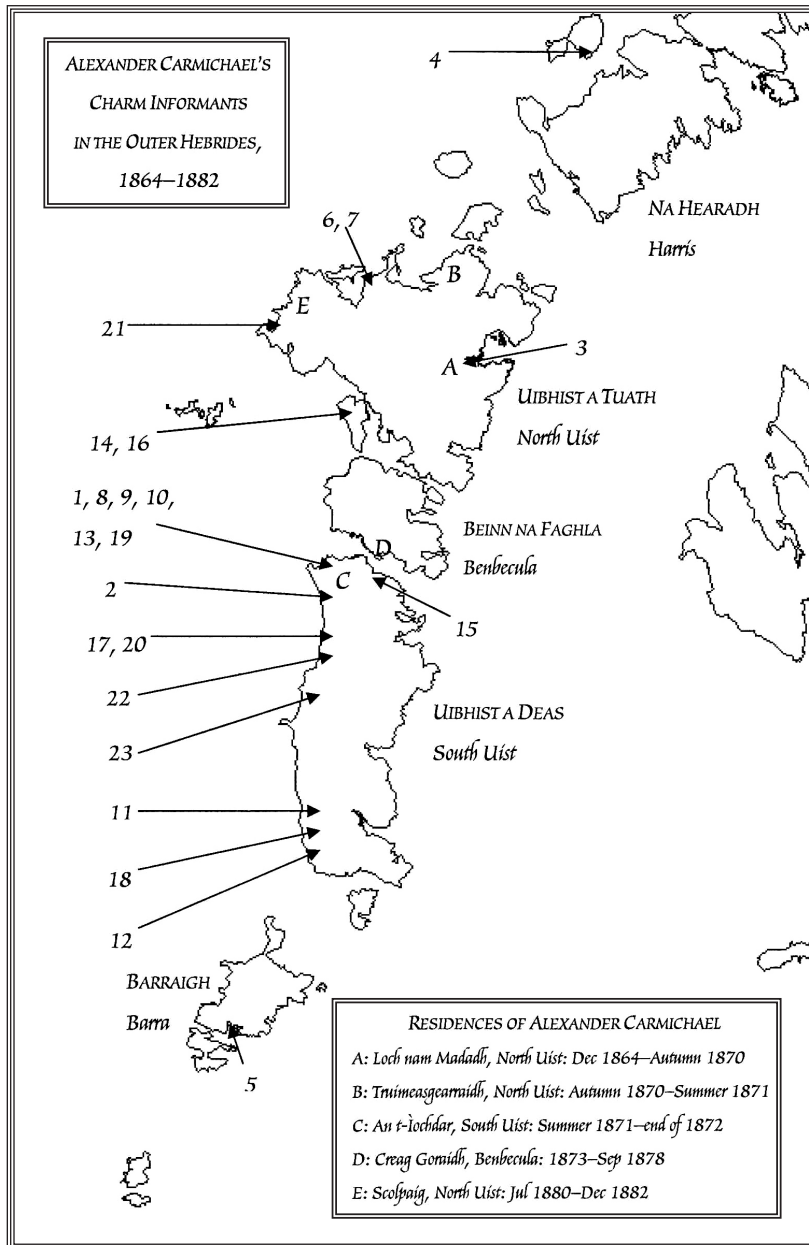
Total number of informants: 21 (those identified in ecclesiastical and official records, out of 23 in total)

Total number of charms: 58 (those texts that can be ascribed to the identified informants above, out of 63 definitely recorded as dating to this period)

Approximate dates of birth are taken as exact. It should be emphasised that older islanders' ages as recorded in the official censuses, especially those of women, tend to be progressively overestimated: even specific birth years may therefore be inaccurate.

Percentages are expressed in round figures.

It may be significant that none of Carmichael's informants was born later than around 1828, suggesting that any potential worker of charms in the community would have to reach middle age before attaining credibility. An analogous conclusion might be drawn from the salience of the 1801–1810 cohort among his informants. During the nearly twenty years that Carmichael lived in Uist, from 1865 to 1882, this group of charmers, progressing from middle to old age, would be the most prominent and enduring in the islands. Although there appears to be no weakening in charm repertoires among the youngest cohort recorded, it should be noted that over half the items recorded from this age group were written down from a single informant. Carmichael's own belief that charms were already falling out of use as island society underwent socio-economic and cultural transformation should be noted, and tested by further research—as far as this is possible—on material gathered from subsequent island generations.



Map 1. Alexander Carmichael's Charm Informants in the Outer Hebrides 1864–1882.

ALEXANDER CARMICHAEL'S CHARM INFORMANTS
IN THE OUTER HEBRIDES

(number of charms recorded on each occasion in brackets)

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1: Anna MacIsaac née MacLellan
Ceann Langabhat, An t-Ìochdar
18.10.1867 (6) | 11: Anna O'Henley
Baghasdail fo Thuath, South Uist
24.3.1873 (1) |
| 2: Alexander MacDonald
Driemor, South Uist
7.4.69 (1) | 12: Ronald MacDonald
Geàrraidh na Mònadh, South Uist
3.2.1874 (1) |
| 3: Isabella Chisholm
at Loch nam Madadh, North Uist
8.5.1869 (7) | 13: Flora MacLeod, "Fionnghal
nighean Tormoid"
Càrnán, An t-Ìochdar, South Uist
?early 1874 (1)
10.4.1875 (3) |
| 4: Marion MacQueen
Miosadar, Tarasaigh, Harris
?8.7.70 (1) | 14: Flora MacLeod, "Fionnghal
nighean Chaluim"
Am Baile Sear, North Uist
?early 1874 (1)
7.4.1875 (1) |
| 5: John Pearson
Ceann Tangabhal, Barra
?.12.1870 (1)
24.9.1872 (2) | 15: John Beaton,
Àird nan Laogh, South Uist
19.9.1874 (4) |
| 6: ?Mary Matheson [doubtful]
Malacleit, North Uist
17.3.1871 (1) | 16: Raghnaid Stewart
Am Baile Sear, North Uist
7.4.1875 (1) |
| 7: Mary Stewart, "Màiri Bhreac"
Malacleit, North Uist
?early 1872 (2)
19.3.1877 (8) | 17: Catherine Macintosh
Staidhle gearraidh, South Uist
20.5.1875 (5)
13.10.1875 (1) |
| 8: Mary MacMillan
Lianacuith, An t-Ìochdar, South Uist
1872 (1) | 18: Margaret Macintosh
Baghasdail fo Dheas, South Uist
14.10.1875 (1) |
| 9: Archibald Currie
Àird na Mòine, An t-Ìochdar, South
Uist
28.10.1872 (2) | 19: Marion MacPhee
Baile Gharbhaith, An t-Ìochdar,
South Uist
22.10.1875 (4) |
| 10: Angus Currie
Àird na Mòine, An t-Ìochdar, South
Uist
29.10.1872 (1) | |

20: John MacInnes
Staoidhle gearraidh, South Uist
30.4.1877 (2)

21: Margaret MacDonald
Hoghage gearraidh, North Uist
25.11.1880 (1)

22: Barbara MacPhee
Dreumasdail, South Uist
[n.d.] (1)

23: Angus MacEachen
Staoinebrig
[n.d.] (2)

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MANUSCRIPTS

Edinburgh University Library: Carmichael Watson Collection.

Glasgow University Library: MSS Gen.

National Archives of Scotland (West Register House), Edinburgh: AD (Precognitions, Lord Advocate’s Department); JC (High Court of Judiciary Proceedings)

CHAPTER III

Charm Indexes: Problems and Perspectives

Tatiana Agapkina and Andrei Toporkov

Introductory Remarks¹

In the past twenty years interest in the study and publication of verbal magic texts has increased considerably. Quite a number of collections of Belarusian, Bulgarian, Czech, French, German, Hungarian, Romanian, Russian, Serbian and Ukrainian charms have been published. But the more frequently new texts in various countries are published, the more difficult it is to see the overall picture. The problem consists not only in the language barriers that prevent scholars from analysing charms from other traditions, but also in the differing ways of understanding problems and methods of research. This last point is largely determined by professional preferences and the divergent scholarly traditions developed in different countries during the past one and a half centuries. For this reason, the situation in the field of charm research can be considered, without exaggeration, to be at a crisis point.

The resolution of this situation, as it seems to us, has been outlined in the research and organisational work of the English folklore specialist Jonathan Roper. He proposed an international index of charms (Roper 2004b, 139–41), and created a database of English

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charms and on this basis wrote a book (Roper 2005). With support of the Folklore Society and the Warburg Institute, Jonathan Roper also organised several international conferences dedicated to charms in different countries of Europe.²

Our proposals can be regarded as an attempt to further develop Roper's ideas. At the same time we have to emphasise that we are relying mainly on our own experience of dealing with charms and the problems of their systematisation: that is, the description of the subject matter of East Slavic charms, research into Russian manuscript charms of the fifteenth to the nineteenth century (see Agapkina and Toporkov 1990; Agapkina 2002; Agapkina 2005; Agapkina 2006; Agapkina 2010; Agapkina forthcoming; Toporkov 2010), fieldwork over a long period into the traditions of word magic in the Russian north, in Belarus and in Ukraine. The first time that the authors encountered living charm traditions was during expeditions to Polesia in the late 1970s and early 1980s. We published an edition of the material (Agapkina, Levkieskaia and Toporkov 2003). Together with the Nizhnii Novgorod charms (Korovashko 1997) and the Russian charms of Karelia (Kurets 2000) it is one of the few annotated editions of East Slavic charms.

In general approach our project considers also the experience of composition of other folklore indexes that dealt primarily with folktale and non-folktale prose. In this connection we would cite the newest edition of Antti Aarne's and Stith Thompson's index of folktale motifs, revised by Hans-Jörg Uther (Uther 2004: see the review by Kozmin [2006]), H. Jason's book, dedicated to the theories and practice of composition of folklore indexes (Jason 2000: see the report by Rafaeva [2006]), and also the collection of papers dedicated to problems of composition of folklore indexes published recently in Russia (Rafaeva, *Problemy ukazatelei*, 2006b).

At the same time we should note that the problems of the composition of a charm motif index in many regards lie in quite another plane from that of folktale and non-folktale prose. As is known, charms are categorised (in Russian) as belonging to the so-called minor folk-

² The materials of the first conference (2002) were published in Roper 2004a. The second book is Roper 2009.

lore genres, in relation to which the terminological and taxonomic devices available to modern folklore scholarship are applicable only to a limited extent. This is connected, first of all, with such apparently “technical” points as the length of charm texts, which generally is far shorter than, for example, that of folktales and commemorative or mythological narratives, and secondly, with the evident heterogeneous character of the charm corpora, which has assimilated a whole series of cultural traditions (oral and written) and genre forms, and which as a result combines what are, strictly speaking, very different texts from a genre point of view: very simple narratives, charm formulas and other kinds of magical texts. In many cases the explication of the underlying motif of these texts involves certain difficulties.

The Index of East Slavic Charms

GENERAL REFLECTIONS

As has already been mentioned, in the last fifteen years (after a break of more than half a century) new collections of Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian charms have been published. Besides L. N. Maikov’s compilation (Maikov 1896–1992), books by G. I. Popov (Popov 1903) and N. F. Poznanskii (Poznanskii 1917) were republished; two manuals by V. L. Kliaus and A. V. Iudin (Kliaus 1997 and Iudin 1997) were published; there were review works on East Slavic charm traditions, on Baltic-Slavic connections, and on the Russian manuscript tradition (for example, Kharitonova 1992; Levkievskaja 2002; Toporkov 2005; Zavialova 2006; Toporkov 2010; Agapkina 2010). All this taken together has materially changed the source base of the East Slavic charm tradition and enables us to raise the question of preparing an index reflecting the richness and variety of Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian charms.

When speaking about the source base of the index, we would in particular emphasise the importance of careful preliminary study of little-known and hard-to-obtain publications, for the most part in the Russian pre-revolutionary periodical press. The fact is that modern researchers have a conception of the composition and extent of motifs of individual national and local traditions of the East Slavic charm

continuum and its peculiarities that unfortunately can hardly be considered adequate or satisfactory at the present time, and judgements formulated on this subject demand, as a rule, correction based on a wider range of sources. Among such judgements, in particular, is the opinion that the tradition of the southern part of the East Slavic territory (primarily the Ukrainian tradition) noticeably differs from Russian and Belarusian traditions by the inclination towards short texts (Khari-tonova 1992, 13). In R. A. Ageeva's opinion, these brief Ukrainian spells are the most archaic form of charms; they have undergone less Christian influence, there is almost no epic element in them, spatial objects remain nameless, and so on (Ageeva 1982, 137). This view of the Ukrainian tradition, in our opinion, is due to the regrettable fact that until very recently the basic source for Ukrainian charms was the widely known book by P. S. Efimenko (1874), which did indeed include, for the most part, short charm texts. At the moment we are working with almost fifty sources, but in preparing the index it will certainly be necessary to enlarge the source base of the Ukrainian charms, and then the picture will look absolutely different and the Ukrainian charms—from the point of view of size and variety of motifs—will appear quite comparable with Belarusian and Russian charms.

For the most part the proposed index continues the Russian tradition of regional indexes, of which the *Comparative Motif Index* (Barag et al., 1979) is the best known and most usable. We consider the principles formulated by the authors of the index of folktales almost thirty years ago to still be viable. They stated the following: "The present index should resolve two problems simultaneously. On the one hand this is, in effect, three national indexes, defining the motif repertoire of Russian, Ukrainian and Belarusian folktales; on the other hand it is the first attempt at a regional motif index. The authors have joined forces to give a comparative description of the East Slavic historico-ethnographic region—an ethnic area of settlement of three closely related peoples, in close contact over many centuries, and speaking languages that facilitate an active mutual exchange of texts and mutual influence in the area of motifs, stylistics, variations, and the creation of a common base of narrative formulas, and so on" (Barag et al., 1979, 13).

Our proposal differs from this and other attempts to compile subject indexes (Russian and East Slavic) in that, among other things,

we do not take into consideration records of charms made outside Ukraine, Belarus and the European part of Russia. This restriction is primarily due to our aim of revealing the “dialect” (regional) divergences of charm traditions among the East Slavs, and secondly due to an unwillingness to consider texts with an obvious imprint of non-Slavic cultural influences, such as are inevitable in particular in the multi-ethnic Siberian traditions.

In his index, Kliaus considered more than 3,000 texts from 80 publications of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Kliaus 1997, 13). The index has served its purpose in systematising Slavic charms and has shown their real variety and richness of tradition. At the same time the index has a number of features that do not allow us to base our work on it (in other words, to work in continuation of already available results): the classification of charms proposed there has a very fragmented character, and their number (981!) is obviously overstated. We believe that there will be no more than 100 to 150 motif types in our index, and we intend, as has already been said, to limit ourselves to the charms of the East Slavs, avoiding for the moment any involvement of other Slavic traditions. Kliaus has grouped texts according to the basic action that is described in them; he has called this action a “motif theme”, rejecting any larger units of motif partitioning; moreover, he did not consider the functionality of the charms. Unfortunately, his index does not give an objective idea of the repertoire of East Slavic charms, with regard to the quantitative structure and geographical distribution of single thematic groups and motif types (for more details, see Toporkov 1999). Motifs and their versions in Kliaus’s index, divided on the basis of “motif themes”, do not compare well with the classification units applied by scholars in other countries (Holzmann 2001; Roper 2005).

THE STRUCTURE OF THE CHARM CORPORA

As the basis of our index, we intend to use a hierarchy that assumes a separation of thematic and functional groups and motif types. While taking into consideration the work of our predecessors, we hope to develop constructive indexing principles so that in the future there will be an opportunity to compare it with indexes or large collections of other ethnic traditions.

Empirical examination of Russian, Ukrainian, Belarusian and some other charm traditions shows that the most natural structure of a charm corpus would be based on a functional principle. The most numerous and least contentious part of the corpus consists of medical charms (against a toothache, a fever, bleeding, different illnesses, and so on). To these may be added the generally less numerous groups: agricultural/trade (cattle-breeding, beekeeping, and so on), social charms (pronounced before a court or civil authorities), love charms, and so on. Since charms belonging to one or another group are united by a general theme (illness, love, household, relations with authorities and so on), we shall call such groups of texts thematic groups.

We do not intend to include in the index other kinds of magical texts, such as texts that accompany economic and household tasks (in Russian *prigovory*), “ritual salutations” (addressed to the people who are carrying out one or another kind of domestic and everyday tasks), or texts addressed to natural objects or phenomena to exert magical influence on them or to achieve some concrete pragmatic purpose (such, as, for example, *zaklichki* of rain or a ladybird).

In general the approach proposed here is similar to that which is used in the study of folktales, where texts are first subdivided into genre types, and then into motif types (Nekliudov 2006, 33). For example, “East Slavic folktale prose is usually rather arbitrarily divided into tales about animals, fantastic tales (fairy tales and legends) and tales of everyday life (short story and humorous)” (Barag et al., 1979, 15).

The difference of charms from folktales is explained by the fact that in the case of charms the principles applied in grouping texts are, at first sight, outside the charm tradition. However, the function of charms is important for their content. In spite of the empirical character of similar groupings, in general they do allow us to organise the corpus of charms into the definite system that we can see in numerous collections of magical texts. This arises from the fact that one of the most important characteristics of charms as a certain kind of text, as we have already said, is their function. We can hardly confuse the charms for stopping bleeding with a “binding spell”, or charms for “beauty” with charms against hernia. If we ignore the functional principle, as some of our predecessors have done, we deprive ourselves and future users of our index of a reliable compass in the vast sea of charm texts.

At the initial stage of work we propose to concentrate first of all on medical charms, since they are the most commonly used and can be fairly easily and more or less precisely classified. This thematic group of charms is then subdivided into separate functional groups: charms for stopping bleeding, against a toothache, a fever, a wakeful child, snake-bite, and so on.

In our intention to divide medical charms into functional groups we realise perfectly well the difficulties with which we shall inevitably be confronted. And one of the most fundamental is the necessity to identify those illnesses for which the popular names (in three national and several more large local traditions) are quite varied and not always clear from the point of view of their internal form. From past experience in most cases we shall have to ignore the dialect variants of names, and combine illnesses or their sub-varieties, which are different in name but similar in symptoms, in one functional group under a general name.

In East Slavic traditions, cases when practically the same charms are applied to the treatment of different illnesses are very characteristic. The East Slavic charm universe, although mainly unifunctional, includes a considerable number of motif types that have a multifunctional character: that is, they serve several functional groups. One of the best known of such motif types is as follows: "In the mythological centre (in the open field, in the blue sea and on a white stone) is somebody (the Virgin/tsar/old man, and so on) who treats X or in some other way helps him to get rid of some illness." Multifunctional charms of this kind should probably be described in special entries in the index.

At the next level we can separate out types (we shall name them also charm types or motif types). So, for example, Ebermann (Ebermann 1903), working on the German magical tradition, has established 14 types of charms against wounds and bleeding to which he has given the following type-names: *Der zweite Merseburger Zauberspruch*, *Jordan-Segen*, *Drei gute Brüder*, *Longinus-Segen*, *Sie quellen nicht*, *Blut und Wasser*, *Glückselige Wunde*, *Sanguis mane in te*, *Adams Blut*, *Der Blutsegen von den drei Frauen*, *Drei Blumen*, *Ein Baum*, *Der ungerechte Mann*, *Scherzhafte Wundsegen* (The second Merseburger charm, Jordan charms, Three good brothers, Longinus charms, It [blood] doesn't flow, Blood and water, The Happy wound, Blood,

stay in you, Adam's blood, Charms about three women, Three flowers, Tree, The unjust person, Comic charms against a wound) (Ebermann 1903).

From 15 to 20 subject types of charms for stopping bleeding can be identified in the East Slavic tradition (Agapkina 2010).

Within the framework of one motif type charms are linked by the character of the basic events described in them. At the same time these charms can differ one from another in the list of personages, details and attributes of action. Charms can be contracted, losing some episodes or, conversely, they may grow by attaching additional episodes. They can be contaminated by the charms of other motif types or functional-thematic groups.

In formulating the "motif type" we do not take into consideration such text elements as the opening and closing formulas of prayers, other opening formulas or binding formulas (the so-called *заклички* and *закрепки*), which play no part in the motif of the charm. We generally ignore "formal" distinctions between separate texts, believing that the same motif type can be realised in the texts in the form of an imperative or a wish, narrative or dialogue, and so on.³ The charm type possesses a semantic, but not a formal stability.⁴

As a result the general scheme of partitioning of the corpus of charms can be presented in the following way:

<i>Levels</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Example 1</i>
Level 1	Thematic group	Medical charms
Level 2	Function group	Charms for a toothache
Level 3	Type	"As X does not have a toothache, so may XX not have a toothache"
Level 4	Version	Description of 4 basic versions: see below.

³ Regarding speech genres applicable to charm texts, see Tolstaia 1999, 155–6.

⁴ Regarding the contraposition of semantic and formal stability, see Nebzhegovskaia-Bartminskaia 2004, 258.

THE STRUCTURE OF AN ENTRY

The charm type can be defined by a headword or a word combination and described by the invariant. Usually one of the keywords or word combinations of charms is used as a heading. It is desirable that it should directly relate to the content of the text and be easily identified. It should not use as a heading casual or obscure word combinations.

The invariant represents the formalised record of the sequence of the most important events described in charms. This is the content base, which is followed through a number of texts and allows them to be isolated from the general continuum of charm tradition: that is, it performs a search and identification function. The invariant has to catch the significant elements of the charms and the relationship between them: for example, in charms for stopping bleeding of the *Jordan-formula* type there are elements such as "River Jordan", "to stand" and "blood", connected by specific syntagmatic relationships.

Within the framework of types, separate versions that have essential motif distinctions can be denoted, but they still keep within the framework of the general motif type (in particular, they can differ both by the development of separate episodes and presence or absence of them). It is desirable that the formalised description of the invariant should reflect the common factor that links versions with each other, and their basic distinctions. It would also be desirable that identified versions should be characterised geographically. It is possible to accompany the description of one or another version with specific characteristic text examples.

Since the index is to include charms from three national traditions, the list of sources is given in the following order: Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian. This method of presentation of material (by separate traditions) is accepted in the comparative index of motifs of East Slavic folktales (Barag et al., 1979), which in this case we follow, having changed, however, the order of sequence of traditions. In arranging them in this sequence we have simply followed the relative numbers of charm texts known to us at the present time. Russian charms are the most widely published, while there are substantially fewer Belarusian charms and even fewer Ukrainian charms. The sources (in lists of sources by separate ethnic traditions) are given according to their publication date. In the future this order will make it easier for researchers

to identify secondary reprints of charms that were previously published but carried no reference to the primary source (for the indication of obvious reprints it is convenient to use an equals sign).⁵

The compiling of the list of sources will involve extensive preliminary research. At this stage it is necessary to identify the widest possible corpus of charms taking into consideration their versions and variants according to place and time of fixing, type of source, the identity of the performer, and so on. It is desirable, although difficult to achieve, to follow a principle of complete description of tradition, including published and archival sources, texts existing in both oral and manuscript traditions, kept not only in oral records, but also in any sort of herbal or collection of magic remedies. At the same time we must definitely exclude sources that contain fake texts (I. P. Sakharov's, M. E. Zabylin's and N. I. Stepanova's collections, and so on [Sakharov 2000; Zabylin 1880]) and also many compilation collections (for example, the collection of "Russian charms" by N. I. Savushkina [1993] and others).

We consider it obligatory to indicate in a separate sub-entry in what form the motifs are known—oral, manuscript or mixed. This is important both in itself and from the viewpoint of studying the history of one or another motif type, and also the study of the geographical distribution of East Slavic charms. A good example would be the distribution of the charm, popular in a sizeable part of East Slavic territories, for curing a dislocation (of the Second Merseburger type: "Let a bone stay to a bone, meat to meat, a vein to a vein..."). In the oral tradition of north and central Russia there are practically no charms for a dislocation, and this type of charm in particular is unknown. At the same time, in the manuscript tradition of the Russian north such charms are found, which seems to testify to different sources of oral and manuscript traditions, and also that each of them has its own dynamic in East Slavic territory (Agapkina 2002, 653–72).

The entry in the index describing one or another motif type should include also the chronological characteristic of known charms, i.e. an indication of their chronological range as a whole, and also of the ear-

⁵ The problem of republishing as one of the difficulties encountered in implementing motif indexes was described by I. I. Smirnov in the preface to his index *East Slavic Ballads and Related Genres* (Smirnov 1988, 3).

liest, often manuscript, and the latest records, or even information on these (for example, unpublished fieldwork data).

A separate sub-entry in an entry is the description of the areal picture of motif type distribution within the three East Slavic traditions. This last point is especially important since revealing the geographical “projection” of East Slavic charm traditions seems to us to be one of the predominant tasks of the future index as a whole. Here we must emphasise that partitioning the East Slavic region into three national traditions does not reflect at all the real dialect structure of the East Slavic charm tradition. Thus, in researching the charms of the Polesia region, we have noticed, for example, that south Russian charms are much closer to those of Ukrainian and Belarusian Polesia, rather than to those of north Russia, which in turn (together with central Russia) form a separate independent motif tradition. On the basis of index data it will be possible to make a list of the basic motif convergences uniting different traditions within the East Slavic ethno-dialectal continuum. The problem of studying the East Slavic charm tradition in areal projection seems to be accomplishable insofar as we have collected a considerable number of charm texts from different regions.⁶

When the charm motif goes back to canonical or non-canonical Christian texts, it is also desirable to include data on the origin of the motif type in the description.

A separate sub-entry is proposed to indicate the functionality of one or another motif type—the basic function and also any additional ones.

East Slavic charms, as we have already mentioned, are “minor” folklore forms and are fairly widely contaminated by each other, which leads to a variety of textual realisations of motif types. In a separate sub-entry we intend to explain common contaminations (both inside the given functional group and at the level of the thematic set, and, if it is necessary, at the level of the charm corpus as a whole). In addition, in the source list in future it is proposed that contaminated variants should be marked in some way (for example, by an asterisk *).

⁶ About the representation of material as a necessary condition for the study of folk dialects, see Iu. A. Novikov’s comments on the experience of geographical study of Russians bylinas undertaken by S. I. Dmitrieva (Dmitrieva 1975; Novikov 2000, 152–75).

The Structure of an East Slavic Index Entry

We propose to use as the headword of an entry a conventional sign of motif type in Russian.

Each entry could contain the following headings:

1. Formalised description of type (invariant);
2. Chronology of fixing including the earliest and latest records;
3. Geography of fixing;
4. List of sources of the three East Slavic traditions (Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian);
5. Information on the origin of the type (mainly for charms related to the Christian manuscript tradition);
6. Mode of functioning of the texts (oral, in the manuscript tradition, mixed);
7. Versions of motif type;
8. Functions of the text and their changes in local use;
9. Contaminations with other types of charms;
10. Features of the given type of charms in separate ethnic and local traditions;
11. Basic research on the given type.

Problems in Creating an International Charm Index

The proposed scheme is of course provisional and is open to discussion. We propose also to discuss the possibility of applying the method of our East Slavic index project to other traditions (first of all European), and to an international index of charms. In other words, the question arises of whether it is possible to construct indexes on a similar basis for other national traditions, and thereafter a comparative index of charms. We are not suggesting that the scheme of the East Slavic index should be applied to indexes of other nations, simply that a particular algorithm or system of description should be used.

At this point in our work we think it would be unprofitable to argue about the concept of *charm*, or the typology of magical texts, or

the relationship between *charms*, *spells*, *prayers*, and so on, but prefer to concentrate mainly on the problems of the systematisation of charms.

It is desirable that the repertoire of any charms tradition should be adequately and fully described by the index, to ensure future transition from the national index to the international index and further to other national indexes.

Undoubtedly, sets of thematic groups and types of charms differ in different traditions. Only a part of the types known in one tradition can be found in other national traditions. We propose in the first instance to include in the international index those types that have an international distribution.

Partitioning charms corpora in an international index could be based on the principles developed earlier for the East Slavic index:

<i>Level:</i>	<i>Name:</i>	<i>Example 2:</i>
Level 1	Thematic group	Medical charms
Level 2	Function group	Charms to stop bleeding
Level 3	Type	Jordan-segen
Level 4	Version	Description of two versions; see below.

The systematisation of charms by their functional-thematic attributes was common in editions of Russian charms in the nineteenth century, following L. N. Maikov's 1869 collection. Obviously this method of systematisation is not unique. For example, the German research tradition is characterised by the use of medieval charm records as a base. It involves such rubrication as *Type of the 1st Merseburger charm*, *Type of the 2nd Merseburger charm*, and so on. This method is impossible for the East Slavs: on the one hand, the fixing of charms began in Russia for the most part only in the second quarter of the seventeenth century (up to that point there had been only separate brief magical texts in birch-bark documents and texts like prayers in manuscript collections), so in fact there are practically no medieval charm records; on the other hand, the East Slavs have a great many charms, they are rather disparate, and they are hard to fit into strictly defined types.

Perhaps one day an index of German charms will be made according to a system of "case texts", but that is a matter for German-

ists (compare Holzmann 2001). In this case the general classification of the texts in a German index will be different from the East Slavic, but the possibility of comparison of texts at the level of separate types will be maintained.

Other national traditions also need similar specific decisions. But it is desirable that the description of types in different national indexes should correspond to a defined model.

Working on the charm index it is important to remember that the index represents not just an end in itself, but also a tool for the future research. As a result we propose to include not only information on versions and variants of charms, but also data on their geographical distribution and chronology of fixing. This will provide future researchers with valuable material for the establishment of the geographical distribution of separate motif types in the European cultural area and their historical development during the Middle Ages and modern times.

The scheme of an entry in the international index concerning one or another type could correspond to the scheme presented above, although with certain modifications.

We propose to use as the entry headword a conventional indicator of motif type in several languages (for example, Latin, German, English and Russian) according to existing tradition or at the discretion of researchers.

Each entry in the international index may include the following headings:

1. Formalised description of type;
2. Chronology of fixing (in particular, the earliest and latest records);
3. Geography of fixing;
4. Sources by different traditions (names of traditions are arranged in alphabetic order);
5. Information on the origin of a type (if available: for example, translation from Latin or Greek, etc.);
6. Form of functioning of texts (oral, manuscript tradition, mixed);
7. Versions of motif type (the description of versions with text examples);
8. Functions of the text (change of functions of the text during practice);

9. Contaminations with other types of charms;
10. Features of the given type of charms in separate national traditions;
11. The basic research on the given type.

The Research Programme (Problems for Discussion)

The comparative index of charms that we envisage should be the result of an international collaboration of scholars. Each of them should work primarily with the materials of their own tradition or the traditions relating to their professional interests, but keeping within the overall plan.

At the present stage it would be unwise to propose compiling a national index with the intention of later using it as the basis of a future international index. Obviously, an international index must be based on bringing together different traditions, and not on any one tradition, however rich it may be.

The opposite approach, to create an international index and attempt to impose it on individual national traditions would also be unwise. It is clear that there are many things in individual national traditions that simply could not fit into our international index.

We therefore propose a procedure that, firstly, envisages a multi-stage, step-by-step programme of research and systematisation of data, and secondly, avoids the extremes of, on the one hand isolationist, and on the other over-centralising, approaches.

We propose the following plan of action:

1. The development of general principles of description of charm traditions in collective discussion (structure of the text corpora; headings, entries, etc.).
2. Researchers from different countries work on national charm indexes. They describe the corpora of charms of different ethnic traditions using previously developed common approaches.
3. At the same time we work on individual entries of an international index.
4. The result would be, firstly, a charm index for selected European traditions and, secondly, an international index of European charms or of their essential fragments.

The ideal would be a system of indexes with the International index of charm types at the centre, with the national or regional indexes around it, compiled according to the same or a similar system. The International index may be continuously expanded and amplified, mainly by involving new national traditions.

This is more or less the way in which the study of folktales evolved: the index by A. Aarne (Uther 2004) (in 1910) stimulated the development of national indexes of folktales (including Russian); further supplemented editions followed. Researchers on charms are now in the same situation as the folktale researchers were before A. Aarne's index (Uther 2004). It depends on us whether to follow this tested path forward, or to simply stand still.

The first phase of the International Index we think could be restricted to the charms of European peoples (in particular those in the Indo-European language families: Germanic, Slavic, Baltic and Romance), and to concentrate primarily on medical charms.

It would be advisable to prepare, by common efforts, a specimen publication devoted to a single functional type of charm. Charms for stopping bleeding, in our opinion, are the most convenient for such research, because of the level of existing research (special monographs by O. Ebermann (Ebermann 1903), V. Mansikka (Mansikka 1929), and F. Ohrt (Ohrt 1930, 269–74), the considerable number of charms published in different languages, the wide distribution of this charm type among different peoples in Europe, the early fixing of such charms in the medieval tradition.

Test Entries

We further envisage two test entries: the first is for the regional (East Slavic) Index, and the second is for the international (European) one. In the first case we selected the charm, which is widespread in all three East Slavic traditions, but is not really known outside the East-Slavic region; it has a folkloric character and occurs most of all in oral performance.

In the second case we have a charm which is widely represented in different European traditions; it has a bookish origin and is connected with the Christian heritage.

We should like to show that the suggested type of index not only allows us to give a formal structural-semantic depiction of the type, but also gives a key for studying its history and geography in the European cultural space.

Index of the East Slavic Charms

CHARMS AGAINST A TOOTHACHE

I. As N doesn't have a toothache, so may NN not have a toothache

1. "(Somebody asks if the teeth of N are causing pain. As it turns out, the teeth of N are not causing pain.) As the teeth of N (a dead man / Adam / Antipa / etc.) are not causing pain, so may the teeth of NN not cause pain." See the description of the versions in item 7.
2. The earliest record dated to the second quarter of the seventeenth century (Sreznevskii 1913, no. 82). The most recent records date to the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first century.
3. The charm is widespread in each of the East Slavic traditions.
4. The sources: see in note.⁷

⁷ *Russian*: Maikov 1869, nos. 62, 65, 66, 67, 68, 70, 72, 73 and 79; Mazhnikov 1893, 128; Kharlamov 1901, 28, nos. 1–2; Popov 1903, nos. 61, 63 and 65–8; Kharlamov 1904, 11; Dobrovolskii 1905, 320; Mansikka 1926, nos. 114–6, 118–22, 125, 127, 128 and 130–2; Adoneva and Ovchinnikova 1993, nos. 410, 413–5 and 417; Razumovskaia 1993, 265; Bulusheva 1994, 46; Grigorash 1995, 118–119; Korovashko 1997, nos. 19, 20, 33 and 36; Novikovas 1997, no. 28; Anikin nos. 1404, 1406–1414, 1416–1425, 1427–1445 and 1447; Protsenko 1998, nos. 87, 91, 96, 102 and 103; Kurets 2000, nos. 194, 195 and 198; Krashenninnikova 2001, nos. 14 and 15; Kulagina 2001, nos. 105–7; Dobrovolskaia no. 11; Vlasova and Zhekulina nos. 449–452; HTKPIO 2002/2: 338, no. 14; Vostrikov 2002, 77 and 78; Berdiaeva 2005, no. 64; Kulagina 2005, 183, no. 42; *Belarusian*: Romanov 1891, 81, nos. 158 and 162, 82, nos. 164–8, 164, nos. 26–7, and 181, no. 159; Shein 1893, 541, nos. 35–36; Demidovich 1896, 130; Kolberg 53, 374; Bartashevich 1992, nos. 607, 608, 609, 610, 611, 613, 615–8, 619, 623 and 627; Moisienko 1996, nos. 127, 128, 130 and 133; Novak 1998, nos. 216, 221, 226, 228, 233, 240, 244, 246, 247 and 256–8; Agapkina,

6. The charm is known predominantly in the oral tradition.
7. There are four main versions, which differ in their form: the first includes the dialogue, the second includes the preceding narrative (the action is located often in the mythological centre), the third includes the formula of the impossible and the fourth includes the *quomodo* formula.
 - 7.1. The dialogue: “The moon (Adam, Antipa), where have you been?—In another world.—Did you see dead men?—Yes, I did.—Had their teeth been causing pain?—No, they had not been causing pain.—As their teeth have not been causing pain, so may the teeth of NN not cause pain.” This version is widespread in all East Slavic traditions everywhere.
 - 7.2. The preceding narrative: “There is a blue sea, a stone is in the sea, a church is on the stone; in the church lies a dead man (dead body, dead head, Adam’s head), who does not have a toothache. So let the teeth of NN not cause pain.” This version occurs predominantly in northern Russian tradition.
 - 7.3. The formula of the impossible: “When the dead man stands up from the coffin, when he walks, works, speaks, thinks, eats, feels pain, at that time NN will have a toothache.” This version is widespread predominantly in Ukraine and Belarus.
 - 7.4. The *quomodo* formula: “As a dead man doesn’t have toothache, so may NN not have toothache.” The version is often included in the dialogic charms, and concludes them, but it may also function independently. It is known in Russian and Belarusian traditions.
8. The charm is used commonly against toothache.

Levkievskaja and Toporkov 2003, nos. 473–7, 480, 483, 484, 485, 487, 492, 494, 498, 501, 502, 508, 509 and 518; *Ukrainian*: Chubinskii 1872, nos. 124b,v, 125z,k; Efimenko 1874, nos. 14–19; Ivatshenko 1878, 177; Rulikowski 1879, 112; Sorokin 1890, 16; Korolenko 1892, 278; Gavrilov 1892, 283; Iastrebov 1894, 49–50; Botsianovskii 1895, 501; Rokosowska 1900, 459; Malinka 1902, nos. 2 and 3; Novitskii 1913, 78; 7, 8; Vasilenka and Shevchuk 1991, 118–21, 126, 129 and 130–2; Bondarenko 1992, no. 42b; Fisun 1998, 57, 58, 59, 60, 66 and 67; Polkovenko 2001, 112; Agapkina, Levkievskaja and Toporkov 2003, nos. 478, 479, 481, 490, 491, 495 and 497.

9. The charm combines often with other charms against toothache, most of all with the type “When three brothers (tsars) meet each other, at that time the teeth of NN will cause pain.”
11. Literature.⁸

Index of European Charms

SECTION: CHARMS FOR STOPPING BLEEDING

I. Jordan-segen / Flum Jordan / Stan’ krov’ v rane, kak voda v Iordane

1. “Christ is baptised in the Jordan / he goes across the Jordan; Christ orders the Jordan to stop / the Jordan stops; as the River Jordan stops, so let the blood stop in the wound.” The invariant consists of the narrative and the incantational fragments; the last may function as a separate charm (for example, in the East Slavic tradition).
2. The charm was known from the eleventh or twelfth century up to the end of the twentieth century. The earliest records: vulgar Latin (manuscript from the Vatican library Hs 5359, fol. 30v, the boundary of the ninth and tenth centuries); Old High German (*Bamberg incantation for stopping bleeding*, eleventh century) and Middle High German (*Milstet incantation for stopping bleeding*, twelfth century). The most recent records: in Belarusian Polesia in the 1980s and 1990s (Agapkina, Levkievskaja and Toporkov 2003; Novak 1998), in Lithuania in Polish in 1991 (Zowczak 2000).
3. The charm is widespread in Central, Western, Northern and Eastern Europe in the Belarusian, Czech, Dutch, English, German, Lettish, Lithuanian, Norwegian, Polish, Russian, Swedish and Ukrainian languages.
4. The sources.
6. The charm is known both in manuscript and oral tradition.
7. There are two main versions, which differ in the content of the narrative part:

⁸ Agapkina, Levkievskaja and Toporkov 2003, no. 475, comments of A. Toporkov; Agapkina (in press); Agapkina 2010, 454–484.

- 7.1. Christ with John or an apostle comes to the Jordan and orders it to stop; the motif of Christ's baptism is absent. The first fixation was in vulgar Latin (the boundary of the ninth and tenth centuries): "Christus et sanctus Johannes ambelans ad flumen Jordane, dixit Christus ad sancto Johanne: 'restans flumen Jordane'. Commode restans flumen Jordane, sic restet vena ista in homine isto. In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti. Amen." [Christ and Saint John were walking by the River Jordan. Christ said to Saint John: "River Jordan, rest!" Just as the River Jordan stood still, so may this vein in this man stand still. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen] (Ebermann 1903, 24).
- 7.2. John baptises Christ in the Jordan; before this there may be an announcement about Christ's birth in Bethlehem. The earliest fixation was in a Middle High German manuscript from Vienna (*Milstet incantation for stopping bleeding*): "Der hêligo Christ wart geboren ce Betlehem, dannen quam er widere ce Jerusalem. Dâ ward er getoufet vone Jôhanne in demo Jordâne. Duo verstuont der Jordânis fluz unt der sîn runst. Also verstant dû, bluotrinna, durch des heiligen Christes minna: Du verstat an der nôte, alsô der Jordân tâte, duo der guote sancte Jôhannes den heiligen Christ toufta. verstan dû, bluotrinna, durch des hêliges Cristes minna." [The Holy Christ was born in Bethlehem, from there he came again to Jerusalem. Then he was baptised by John in the Jordan. Then the River Jordan and its current stood still. So, bloodflow, be still!, through the Holy Christ's love. You must needs stand, as did the Jordan, when the good Saint John baptised the Holy Christ. Bloodflow, you be still!, through the Holy Christ's love] (Schulz 2003, 81).
8. The charm was used mainly for stopping bleeding and against a bloody wound, but from the fifteenth century in different traditions it functioned also as a charm against other illnesses.
9. The charm combines often with other charms for stopping bleeding: *Longinus-formula* and *Blood and water from the wound*.
10. The peculiarities of the charms in different traditions:
 Belarusian: the spread of the charm in East Slavic traditions (first of all in Belarusian) is connected with a Polish Catholic influence

(Zowczak 2000, 298–9); in Belarusian (and also in Russian and Ukrainian) the charm consists of the *quomodo* formula, and the narrative part is absent;

Czech: the charm is used against snakebite, against conflagration, against consumption; it is not used for stopping bleeding.

English: the most popular type in England; it amounts to nearly one twelfth of the whole corpus of English charms. There are 42 English texts in J. Roper's database: the earliest example is from the fifteenth century, the latest from 1929, 23 records belong to the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and 18 to the period from 1800 to 1929 (Roper 2005, 104–9).

Russian: the charm is known in a few records in the south of Russia only, and it is not known at all in the centre and north of Russia; the earliest text is in a seventeenth-century manuscript herbal translated from Polish and compiled in Lithuanian Rus (Pushkarev 1977, 115).

11. Literature.⁹

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⁹ Ebermann 1903, 24–35; Jacoby 1913, 200–9; Poznanskii 1917, 61–3 and 219–22; Ohrt 1930, 269–74; Ohrt 1931–1932; Ohrt 1938, 25.1; Zowczak 1994, 15–9; Davies 1996, 20–1; Zowczak 2000, 297–304; Holzmann 2001, 116–9 and 94–6; Agapkina, Levkievskaia and Toporkov 2003, 176, no. 283; Agapkina's comments; Schulz 2003, 79–93; Arnautova 2004, 288–9; Roper 2005, 104–9; Agapkina 2006, 63–8; Zavialova 2006, 210–5.

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CHAPTER IV

Medieval Narrative Charms

Edina Bozóky

Many of the narrative charms that have been collected by European folklorists can be traced back to medieval or ancient models. In this paper I present a brief survey of medieval narrative charms considered from four points of view: a) thematic classification; b) occurrence; c) language; d) efficiency.

Thematic Classification

An important element of medieval charms is the *historiolae*, brief anecdotes preceding a command addressed to evil forces. They invoke from the past a miraculous incident—most commonly a miraculous healing—that presents analogous circumstances to the situation of the patient. The event or the miracle related in the story represents a precedent that the patient hopes will be repeated.

In medieval Western Europe, the first recorded charm formulae of this type date from the ninth and tenth centuries. Most early medieval charms are preserved in Latin; vernacular versions are more frequent from the twelfth century on, and they predominate from the end of the Middle Ages.

Narrative charms can be classified by themes, by protagonists or by other common motifs (cf. Bozóky 2003 and 2009). Typological classification has been established empirically by several folklorists; for example, Jonathan Roper has recently published a very useful typology of English verbal charms (Roper 2005), and Andrei Toporkov presents new ideas on this topic in this volume.

The principal types of medieval narrative formulae involve apocryphal episodes from the lives of Christ or the saints. I will present here some of these charm types.

One of the most ancient formulae refers to the *encounter of three angels with seven demons of illness*. The three angels who adjure demons to do no harm are most frequently Raphael, Gabriel and Michael. They meet seven demons bearing the names of diseases at Mount Sinai.

1. Three angels strolling on Mount Sinai encountered there Nessia, Nagedo, Stechedo, Troppho, Crampho, Gigihite and Paralysis [names mostly for gout or rheumatism].¹ The angels asked them where they were bound. "We are going", they replied, "to the servant of God N., to torment his head, weaken his veins, suck his marrow, break his bones, and destroy his whole body." Then the angels said to them: "We adjure you, Nessia, Nagedo, Stechedo, Troppho, Crampho, Gigihite, and Paralysis, by the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, by the Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of God, by the apostles, martyrs, confessors, virgins, by all the saints and the elect of God, that you do not annoy this servant of God N., neither in the head, nor in the veins, nor in the marrow, nor in the bones, nor in any part of his body." Amen [trans. from the Latin].²

The charm goes back to late Judaic tradition: in an ancient Hebrew variant from the seventh century AD, three angels encounter Lilith,

¹ *Nessia*: sciatica or arthritis; *Nagedo*: corrosion; *Stechedo*: distressing pain; *Troppho*: German *Tropf*, gout; *Crampho*: cramp; *Gigihite*: gout; *Paralysis*: paralysis.

² "Tres angeli ambulaverunt in monte Synay. Quibus obviavit Nessia, Nagedo, Stechedo, Troppho, Crampho, Gigihite, Paralysis. Ad quos angeli dixerunt 'Quo itis?' Qui dixerunt 'Nos imus ad famulum dei .N. caput eius vexare, venas eius enervare, medullam evacuare, ossa eius contere, et totam compaginem membrorum eius dissolvere.' Quibus angeli iterum dixerunt 'Adjuramus te, Nessia, Nagedo, Stechedo, Troppho, Crampho, Gigihite, Paralysis, per patrem et filium et spiritum sanctum, per sanctam Mariam virginem et matrem domini, per apostolos, per martires, per confessores, per virgines, per omnes sanctos et electos dei, ut non noceatis huic famulo dei .N. non in capite, non in venis, non in medullis, non in ossibus suis, nec in aliqua parte corporis sui. Amen.'" (Bartsch 1873, 46).

the slayer of newborn children (see Gaster 1900, 129–62). The seven demons are associated with the vices in the pseudepigraphic *Testament of Reuben*. In the Gospels, seven demons are expelled from Mary Magdalene; another reference mentions seven spirits that enter a man.³ In the apocryphal *Passion of Matthew*, the demon causing the illness of the emperor's wife, son and daughter-in-law is called the “demon with seven names”. A medieval Latin conjuration identifies seven “sisters” with seven fevers.⁴ The adjuration formula used by the angels is a variant of a formula for anointing the sick that is found in Gregorian-Gelasian and Ambrosian sacramentaries (see Warner 1915, 31).

Another very popular narrative charm is that of the *Three good brothers*, whose prototype goes back to the fifth century.⁵ It is a composite formula: three brothers encounter Jesus Christ; they tell him that they are going to gather some herbs to heal wounds. Jesus recommends them to utter a conjuration with reference to the wound that the centurion Longinus made in the side of the Lord.

2. Three good brothers were walking along the way and the Lord Jesus Christ appeared before them and said: “Three good brothers, where are you going?” They replied to him: “Lord, we go to the mountain to gather some herbs for wounds, bruises and pains.” And the Lord said: “Come with me and swear to me on the crucifix and by the milk of the Blessed Virgin that you will not reveal the secret nor sell it. Go to the Mount of Olives and take some olive oil, soak some wool in it, and place it on the wound, speaking thus: ‘Just as the soldier Longinus pierced the side of the Lord, and it neither bled nor felt bad nor was painful nor swelled nor festered nor was burning, similarly this wound that I enchant will neither bleed nor fester nor will be painful nor

³ Lk 8, 2; Mk 16,9; Mt 12, 45; Lk 11, 26.

⁴ *Carmen ad febres*, Ms Dijon, Bibliothèque Municipale, 448, fol. 181 (eleventh century) in Wickersheimer, 1966, 32–3: “In nomine Spiritus sancti conjuro vos febres. Septem sorores estis. Prima ex vobis dicitur Lilia. Secunda Restilia. Tertia Fugalia. Quarta Suffoca. Quinta Affrica. Sexta Julia. Septima Macha.”

⁵ Oxford, Bodleian Library, Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 1384, in Preisendanz 1928, t. II, 215–6; English translation in Meyer and Smith 1999, 31.

will swell nor will be putrefied nor will have an inflammation.
In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost.”
Amen. [trans. from the Latin]⁶

Used separately, the charm of *Longinus* occurs very frequently.

The charm type *Flum Jordan* evokes an apocryphal miracle that happened when Jesus was baptised in the Jordan and the river stopped flowing (cf. example no. 5).⁷ It was used to staunch bleeding.

Another widespread formula (*Super petram*) begins with the motif of St. Peter sitting outside Jerusalem Gate, or on a stone, or on a block of marble. He is suffering from fever or toothache. Jesus asks him about his affliction, and heals him by a conjuration:

3. Sitting on a block of marble, Saint Peter holds his head in his hands, and is suffering and exhausted by a toothache. Jesus appears before him and says “Why are you sad, Peter?” “Lord, the worm of migraine has come to eat up my teeth.” Jesus says then: “I adjure you, O worm of migraine, by the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, that you leave N., the servant of God and that you never again annoy him” [trans. from the Latin].⁸

⁶ Ms Leipzig, Universitätsbibliothek, 73, fol. 142^v, thirteenth century, in Köhler 1868, 184–5: “Tres boni fratres ambulabant per unam viam et occurrit illis dominus Ihesus Christus et ait: ‘Tres boni fratres, quo itis?’ Dicunt ei: ‘Domine, imus ad montem colligere herbas plagationis, percussions et doloris.’ Et dixit dominus: ‘Venite mecum et iurate mihi per crucifixum et per lac beate Virginis, ut non in abscondito dicatis, nec mercedem inde accipiatis. Sed ite ad montem oliveti et tollite inde oleum olive, intingite in eo lanam ovis et ponite super plagam et sic dicite: “Sicut Longinus miles latus salvatoris aperuit, non diu sanguinavit, non rancavit, non doluit, non tumuit, non putruit, nec ardorem habuit, sic plaga ista, quam carmino, non sanguinet, non rancet, non doleat, non tumeat, non putreat, nec ardorem tempestatis habeat. In nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti.”’”

⁷ *Chronicon paschale*, 1832, 420 ff., and *Patrologia Graeca*, 92, c. 545, § 225. Cf. Jacoby 1902.

⁸ Ms Wien, sixteenth-c., in Schönbach 1880, 308: “Sanctus Petrus cum sederet super petram marmoream misit manum ad caput, dolore dentium fatigatus tristabatur. Apparuit autem ei Jesus qui ait: ‘Quare tristaris, Petre?’ ‘Domine, venit vermis emigraneus et devorat dentes meos.’ Jesus autem ait: ‘Adjuro te, emigranee, per patrem et filium et spiritum sanctum, ut ex eas et recedas a famulo dei .N. et ultra eum non ledas.’”

Several *historiolae* summarise a beneficent action or, more frequently, a triple action. One charm type refers to Job, who gets rid of worms. Another evokes St. Nicasius (of Rheims), who asked the Lord to be healed. The charm of *Three virgins* or *sisters* enumerates their actions, the last one of which is a positive act of restoration (cf. example no. 10). The three sisters can be substituted by three angels, saints or flowers.

A great number of narrative charms have the general theme of an encounter (cf. Ohrt 1936, 49–8). It makes possible the confrontation of the supernatural helper with the sick, the healer with the patient.

There are also other significant *crystallising motifs* in narrative charms, such as places that have an intermediate position in space: “before the gate” (*ante portam*); “on the bridge” (*super pontem, in ponte*); “on a road” (*per unam viam*); “on the seashore” (*in ripa maris, super ripam maris*). These places symbolically underline the mediating process, the transition from illness to healing. Other places suggest the mediation between two elements: the mountain, intermediary between earth and heaven (Mount Sinai, the Mount of Olives); the riverside or seashore, between earth and water. Among the elements, water and stone predominate. Stone, in particular marble (*in petra, super marmoream*), is the key motif in several Latin and vernacular incantations. In folklore charms, water and stone are also often associated.

Colours are sparse in Latin formulae, and are limited to black, white and red. But in the charms of Eastern European vernacular folklore, colours have an important symbolic role. For example, the water in which the infant Jesus is washed is poured on red marble, and then flows into the black earth.

Occurrences

First of all, we should underline the importance of written charms in the Middle Ages. Charm formulae were noted down in order to help people to memorise them, and they were very often also used in a written form, such as textual amulets.

Medieval charms can be found principally in *medicinal recipe collections*. The philologist Paul Meyer has noted that “in almost all recipe collections, and especially those written in the vernacular, charms and

talismans can be found.”⁹ Anglo-Saxon leechbooks (medical handbooks) of the tenth and eleventh centuries are especially rich in various healing traditions: they contained medicinal recipes, liturgical formulae and popular cures. Among them are found several charms in Latin and the vernacular. Popular medicinal recipe collections in England continue even after the Norman Conquest. They are particularly interesting for their bilingualism or trilingualism (cf. Hunt 1990). On the continent, production of such medicinal compilations was equally frequent.

Generally, charms that are inserted in a collection remain scattered amongst conventional recipes, but sometimes they form micro-series. In the recipe collections, the charm often constitutes an *alternative method of cure*. For example, to make childbirth easy, the British Library MS Sloane 146 suggests either a charm (a *bref*) to be read and put down on the stomach of the parturient, or a drink to give her (ibid., 278). It is rare that a charm and a remedy complement each other. The charm is not added to any medication, but it is another method, independent of but equivalent to the physical treatment.

Charms and apotropaic prayers were incorporated even in learned medical writings. They were considered to be a special category of empirical remedies, which are not based on the natural causes of sickness, but work through specific divine power—*virtus* (Olsan 2003, 343–6). For example, Thomas Fayreford, a provincial physician of the fifteenth century, recommends the *Three good brothers* charm as “a good empiricum proven on the wounds of the poor.”¹⁰

In the manuscripts, charms often catch the eye of the reader by their title *carmen*, *praecantatio*, *charme*. Sometimes the definite article precedes the word “charm” as if to indicate that it is already a well-known formula. For example: “This is the charm of St. William, which St. Gabriel took, on behalf of Our Lord, to charm the Christians against worms, gout...”¹¹ In order to emphasise the charms, the

⁹ Meyer 1908, 359, n. 1: “Dans presque tous les recueils de recettes, mais surtout dans ceux en langue vulgaire, il y a des charmes ou des talismans.”

¹⁰ Quoted by Olsan 2003, 351: “Empiricum bonum expertum in vulneribus pauperum” (BL, MS Harley 2558, fol. 64v).

¹¹ Ms Oxford, Bodley 761, fol. 20v (fourteenth century), in Meyer 1908, 515: “Ceo est la [sic] charme seint Willame, que seint Gabriel la porta par Nostre Seigneur pur charler chrestiens de verm, de gute...”

copyist or the user sometimes puts a cross in the margin to be able to locate them at a glance.

Charms are always additions in the broadest sense of the word, even when they are incorporated in a compilation. They are very often copied in the margins or in the blank spaces of manuscripts of various kinds. At the end of the Middle Ages, charms enter into Books of Hours. For example, in the Saint-Brieuc Book of Hours, we can find the *Orison of St. Apollonia* against toothache, the charm of the *Three good brothers* for healing wounds, followed by the formula of the *Three kings*; towards the end of the manuscript, there is the *Life of Saint Margaret of Antioch* in verse form, a text amulet against various dangers and particularly for easy childbirth, which occupies around twenty folios.¹²

The most interesting pieces are the individual textual amulets written on parchment or paper sheets or rolls. Extant pieces are very rare, but they were very widespread in the Middle Ages. The wearing on one's person of written charms was supposed to offer continuous protection. In some cases written amulets were applied to particular parts of the body. A famous document concerning the arrest of an illuminator called Jean Gillemer in 1472 helps us to imagine the manner in which written amulets were diffused. The illuminator was questioned on suspicion of a plot against King Louis XI of France. A great quantity of paper and parchment leaflets was found amongst his personal belongings: a parchment amulet against fevers; a toothache amulet with the *Orison of St. Apollonia*, a love amulet, a paper sheet with the painted image of the "Measure of Christ", a multipurpose prayer roll, and so on. He explained that he had picked these up at various places through which he had passed: from a man in a tavern, but also in churches and other sacred places (Lecoy 1892, 396–408; Favreau 1985, 155–8).

Extant textual amulets are veritable anthologies of charms. For example, the amulet of the Canterbury Cathedral Library (Additional MS 23; Skemer 2006), written in the mid-thirteenth century, is an amalgamation of old and new formulae: heavenly letters, *characteres*, magical seals, and several lists of divine and angelic names. Narrative charms appear in lesser numbers here: some blood-staunching charms, those of Longinus, Zacharias and Veronica.

¹² Ms Saint-Brieuc, Bibliothèque Municipale, 1, fol. 167–70 and 199v–219.

Several individual pieces contain the *Life of St. Margaret*, used by or for parturient women as a birthing charm (cf. Aymar 1926, 273–347; Herkenrode 1847, 2–23; Brunel 1926, 385–401). One of the most interesting is conserved in the Musée National des Arts et Traditions Populaires in Paris (Carolus-Barré 1979, 256–75). It is a parchment sheet of the fourteenth century, which contains, amongst other charms, a French versified legend of St. Margaret.

Language

Charms circulated with rapidity and astounding adaptability. They had a great ability to pass from one linguistic context to another. From the first recorded charms, it is common to find vernacular texts in a Latin context, or Latin formulae annotated in the vernacular; or again, to see the same formula in various vernacular languages. This phenomenon reveals the importance of the meaning of charms. In the case of comprehensible charms, the language was only the supporting structure, subordinated to the meaning. One text fully confirms this; in the instructions of a charm to get rid of warts, the following can be read:

4. The mass of the Holy Spirit must be celebrated. During the mass, every time that Oremus is said, the adjutor must say the name of the patient and say: “N., your warts fall in honour of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.” These words can be pronounced in Latin, in Roman [i.e. Vulgar Latin] or in English.¹³

Several linguistic processes existed to insert charms into a collection. In the vernacular recipe collections, usually the compiler keeps the formulae in Latin, but he gives the instruction in the vernacular:

¹³ Ms Oxford, Bodleian Digby 69, fol. 100v, in Hunt 1990, 314: “Ad verrucas tollendas: Missa de Sancto Spiritu debet celebrari. Quotiens ad illam missam Oremus dicitur, totiens et in illa hora adiutor nominet nomen patientis .N. et dicat ‘N. verrucas tue cadant in honore Patris et Filii et Spiritus sancti.’ Ista verba dicantur lingua latina vel romanice vel anglice.”

5. *ffor to staunche bledynge sey this iij tymes & iij pater nosters.*
Christus in bethlem natus est: in Iordane baptizatus est: Iordanis
*aquas ffecit stare sic faciat tuum sanguinem cessare N.*¹⁴

On the other hand, in the Latin collections, the charms are often quoted in the vernacular, with rubrics (headings) and instructions in Latin:

6. *Ad superos carmen. In nomine Patris et filii et spiritus Sancti pone pollicem super ossa et dic: Si cist souros ci est venuz par dialbe [sic] inchantesun, tollet l'en Deus par sa magne resurectium; si veirement ffor to staunche bledynge sey this iij tymes & iij pater nosters*
Christus in bethlem natus est: in Iordane baptizatus est: Iordanis
aquas ffecit stare sic faciat tuum sanguinem cessare N. cum Deus fut
nez et el presepie fut mis et retrovez si veirement seit cis cavals de
cest souros livrez e[n] icez verues (BL MS Sloane 475, fol. 109rv,
twelfth century, in Hunt 1990, 82).

Some compilers of recipe collections practised a genuine bilingualism or trilingualism. It is quite common to find in insular manuscripts two formulae in the vernacular one after the other, first in French and then in English:

7. *Ad sanguinem restringendum...* Estanchez sanc, estanchez en le honour de Pier et de Fiz et de Seint Espirit et de la seynt crois. Auxi vereiment comme Nostre Seigneur Jhesu Crist suffrist mort en la crois le bon venderdy pur nous et pur touz pechours, [...] estaunchés, sanc, estaunchez. Amen. *Aliud carmen.* Primo inquire nomen hominis et dic quinquis Pater Noster et Ave et tunc dic: For the woundes at God sofrid on the crois for to by us out of al the world, stanch, blod [...].¹⁵

¹⁴ Ms Cambridge, Gonville and Caius College 457, fol. 8 (fifteenth century), in Sheldon 1978, 204 ("For staunching blood, say this three times and three Pater Nosters. Christ born at Bethleem; he is baptised in the Jordan; he stopped the water of the Jordan. May he similarly stop your blood .N.").

¹⁵ *Compendium* of medical receipts of John of Greenborough, in Hunt 1990, 86.

The bilingual presentation is even closer in a formula where an English text and another in French are noted as forming a unity:

8. Pur sang estauncher: In nomine Patris etc. Longes the knyht him unterstod, to Cristes syde his pere he sette, ther com out water an blod. In the nome of the Vader astond, blod, in the nome of the Holy Gost asta, blod, at Cristes wille ne drople e namore. Beau sire Dieu, Jhesu Crist, auxi veroiement come Longes le chevaler vus fery de une launce a le coste destre, tannqe al cuer de quei il ne saneit dont il issist sang e eawe de quei sil recoverist la vewe, vus, pri auxi verroiement qe cest sang estanchez e vus comaund en soun seint noun, vus, sang, qe vus estannchez.¹⁶

Sometimes the Latin formula and its vernacular version figure together: for example, the charm of the *Three good brothers* in a Latin and a German version in a fifteenth-century manuscript.¹⁷

In general, when Latin formulae were translated into vernacular languages they were diffused more widely. Translation was essential in the case of prose texts, often narrative, whose meaning contributed to the healing process. The translation of charms in verse produced freer variations and improvisations than those in prose. The popularity of verse formulae is confirmed by the fact that the majority of oral charms in folklore are attested in a rhythmic or rhyming form.

In spite of the relative stability of formulae, the dynamic circulation of charms and their passage from one language to another gave rise to textual variations. In the structure of the formulae, elements of crystallisation—which form the core (or nucleus) of the charm—have the principal role. There are places, objects, symbolic numbers and colours. For example, in a charm used most often against the speck in the eye (*macula*), the core motif is “on the riverside” (or “seashore”). In the first known occurrences it is a hen that lifts the speck from the eyes of the patient, whilst in the later versions the formula keeps the motif of the seashore, but instead of the hen, we find three saints, gen-

¹⁶ Ms BL Harley 273, fol. 112v (fourteenth century), in Hunt 1990, 88–9.

¹⁷ Ms München, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 118921, fol. 47v.

erally St. Nazarius, St. Thecla and St. Aquilina. Each one of them suggests a different action, the last of which is the removal of the speck.

The principle of triplicity—three persons and three actions, of which the last one is always the act of healing—is the organising principle of a series of charms, that of the *Three sisters* or *Three virgins*.

9. Marcellus Empiricus (fifth century):

There was a tree in the middle of the sea and hanging from it was a bucket of human intestines; three virgins went around it, two knotted them, one unravelled them” [trans. from the Latin].¹⁸

10. *Medicina Plinii* (eleventh century):

Three sisters were walking; one was turning, the second separating, the third dissolving [trans. from the Latin].¹⁹

11. *Médecinaire liégeois* (thirteenth century):

Sainte Marie aloit par voie, le fiz Deu portoit, trois serours samanz trova, l’une avoit a non Resta, li altre Cesta, et li tierce Stupa; plaist Deu le tout poisans sainte Marie ke de ces plais saine n’isent (Haust 1941, 116).

We find free adaptation equally in French in a fifteenth-century insular manuscript:

12. Ive et Eve a saynte Suene furent seorures. Ceo dist Ive: “suche”; ceo dist Eve: “estupe”; ceo dist Suene: “meis nen isse gute.”²⁰

Charm variants were organised and reorganised around a dominant element having a particularly significant value. With a limited arsenal of motif and with a few, but very efficient literary processes, apotro-

¹⁸ Marcellus Empiricus, Niedermann and Liechtenhan, eds., 1968, t. II, 500: “Stabat arbor in medio mare et ibi pendeat situla plena intestinorum humanorum ; tres uirgines circumibant, duae alligabant, una reuoluebat.”

¹⁹ *Incantamenta Physicae Plinii Sangallensis*, no. 24 (Ms St.-Gallen 751), in Önnarfors 1985, 239: “Tres sorores ambulabant, una uolbebat, alia cernebat, tertia soluebat.”

²⁰ Ms BL Sloane 962, fol. 138, in Hunt 1990, 95.

paic formulae produced an almost infinite number of variants. They could be transformed by the suppression/addition of an element, or by changing the verb or the protagonist's name.

Efficiency

In non-narrative charms, the desired state, cure or protection is expressed by a conjuration, a direct order addressed to supernatural evil powers or to the sickness. The officiating person, the healer, assumes here the role of mediator between the sick man or woman and the malevolent forces.

In narrative charms, a story—even very nuclear—introduces the conjuring formula. Here, the supernatural healing power is transferred, at least in part, to the protagonist of the micro-story.

We can distinguish several types of mediating process in narrative charms. Firstly, *direct mediation* works in the charm type of the *Three angels* (ex. no. 1). The present is projected into mythic time (*in illo tempore*), and the supernatural action, which is imagined to heal the actual patient, is presented as already accomplished. David Franckfurter calls this kind of charm or spell, which “simply declares a situation as *fait accompli*,” “declarative” (Franckfurter 1995, 467). There is no distinction between the supernatural and the realistic level. The supernatural protagonists—the angels who conjure the malevolent forces and the demons—utter at the same time the name of the actual sick patient. In general, this category of charm has a dialogue structure.

Past and present, *historiola* and reality are equally interwoven in the charm type *Supra petram* (ex. no. 3). Here the encounter between the patient (St. Peter) and the healer (Christ) is followed by the adjuration pronounced by Christ himself: he directly addresses the worm causing the toothache. By a skilful transposition of the reality to past, the name of the actual patient is substituted for that of St. Peter. Thus the sick man is integrated into mythic time.

A special category of direct mediation is represented by the formula of the *Three good brothers* (ex. no. 2). Even if the name of the sick man is not specified in the charm, it seems to concern him directly; the Lord acts and speaks for him.

In another category of narrative charm, the *mediation* is *indirect*: the conjuration is not uttered by the protagonist of the *historiola*, but by the actual healer. The *historiola* is a model for the actual successful cure; the accent is put on analogous magic. "One assimilates the actual situation to the situation described as a prototype, with this logic: if a god, hero, or saint was able to do something, often something very difficult, can he not do the same thing in the actual analogous situation?"²¹ The charms built on the relationship "just as/so" or "thus/therefore" were very diverse. It is the miraculous and extraordinary character of the past event that furnishes the basis of the analogy in narrative charms. But the past event and the actual situation do not necessarily have any point in common. Analysing folkloric charms, T. Todorov has remarked that "the function of comparison is not to make some resemblances emerge, but rather to affirm the possibility of a relationship between some incidents that belong to quite different series, and thus to permit putting the universe in order. In this manner, the perturbing act is integrated into a reassuring order..."²²

In narrative charms, the sickness is not considered as an isolated case, but as a part of the natural order disturbed by the intrusion of supernatural forces. The "symbolic efficiency" of narrative charms resides, it would seem, in the process of mediation. The integration of the patient into the mythic order gives him or her the sensation of protection and security, and thus produces an improvement in health.

²¹ Cf. Mauss 1950, 49: "On assimile le cas présent au cas décrit comme à un prototype, et le raisonnement prend la forme suivante: Si un tel (dieu, saint ou héros) a pu faire telle ou telle chose (souvent plus difficile), dans telle circonstance, de même, ou à plus forte raison, peut-il faire la même chose dans le cas présent, qui est analogue."

²² Todorov 1973, 52: "la fonction de la comparaison n'est pas de faire ressortir des ressemblances mais plutôt d'affirmer la possibilité même d'une mise en relation entre événements appartenant à des séries différentes, de permettre la mise en ordre de l'univers... C'est ainsi que l'acte perturbateur, inconnu, se trouve intégré à un ordre rassurant..."

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CHAPTER V

The Historical Development of “Charm” Terminology in Hungarian

Vilmos Voigt

1. Our beloved Hungarian folklore and language offer a treasure house for comparative philology and religion—but only if scholars examine the facts without bias and are not fooled by false preconceptions. One of the most common fallacies is the way of thinking that asserts that all Hungarian words, texts and rituals are historically invariable, and that they automatically represent something prior to the Hungarian Conquest of the Carpathian Basin in AD 896. (See, for example, the endless literature concerning Hungarian “shamanism” from the remote past of Siberia up to the recent Harnerian trance workshops on Villányi road, Budapest.) On the other hand, it can quite properly be said that early or medieval Hungarian texts very often represent the oldest traceable Finno-Ugric or Turkic semantic data, and these are very important sources also for any comparative history of beliefs and religion in Europe, Central Asia and so on.

2. The common Hungarian word for “charm” is *báj*-. (The other Hungarian key word for “magic” is the similarly interesting *varázs*-. However, in my paper I shall not make any analysis of the second word.) *Báj*-. is from an Old Turkic loan word in Hungarian, which in its derivatives has been equated, as early as Albert Szenci Molnár’s *Dictionarium Latinoungaricum* (Nürnberg, 1604 and in various later editions) with “incantatio”.¹

¹ More precisely, on page *IN* we read: “Incantamentum *Megbűvölés bajolás*—Incantatio *Idem*—Incantator *Bűvös Bajos*—Incanto *Meg bűvölöm bájolom*”. In the reverse part of the dictionary, *Dictionarium Ungaricolatinum* (same year,

The Hungarian derivations (such as *bájolás*, “making charms” or *bájoló* and *bájos*, “charm-maker”) occur in Hungarian codices from 1456 and from 1506 onwards. In early Hungarian written documents (1519, 1565, and so on) we find also an interesting double synonym: *bű-báj*, *bű-bájos* and cognates, where the Hungarian *bű*, “enchanted, magic(al)” may be derived from another Old Turkic word.² The Turkic *bay* has a primary meaning of “strip, knot, binding/bound, rope” and so on, and it is also connected in modern Turkic languages with words that mean “magical binding, magical tie”. Hungarian linguists refer to the following data: Uighur *bögü*, Chagatay *büyü*, Cumanian *bügü*, Ottoman Turkish *büyü* and so on, which come from a very old Turkic word meaning “magic”. The Hungarian reduplication *bű + báj*, “magic” + “charm” is easily explicable: see, for example, the equally redundant German *Zauberspruch*, “magic” + “charm”.

Since the Turkic and Hungarian words belong to a very old religious vocabulary, it is not easy to prove what their actual meaning was, and at what time, in the available documents during the period from about the tenth century AD until today, either in Hungary or among the Turkic peoples.

3. Very fortunately, a famous Protestant printed collection of sermons, *Ördögi kísértetek* (Temptations by the Devil), by Péter Bornemisza (printed in Sempite, 1578) at the end of part 5 (“Contemporary events”) contains (on pages 805^v–809) the full texts of eight Hungarian *bájoló imádság* or “charming prayers” from an old woman (see the critical edition: Bornemisza 1955, 134–7). Bornemisza, an extremely well-educated humanist and priest, also mentions in his book the name of the “informant”, the village where she was living, the fellow priest who wrote down the texts, and so on. The rendering of the texts is

same place) on page *BA* we read: “*Bájolas Incantatio*”. On page *BV* there are further important references: “*Bűvölés bájolás Incantatio, incantamentum—Bűvölöm bájolom Incanto—Bűvösbajolás Cantatio, Incantatio—Bűvösbajos Incantator, -trix. Veneficus/a.*” See the reprint edition: Imre, ed., 1990. In my paper here and hereafter I have simplified the Hungarian orthography of the old sources, but this will make no difference to my philological conclusions.

² See the data in Benkő 1967, I, *s.v.* I have here simplified the orthography of Turkic data too.

thus in fact word-for-word. Bornemisza relates an exorcism story of the woman, and refers to the practice of charming (four times) as *bájolás*, and in the subtitle above the texts in the book he also uses a descriptive compound form: *bájoló imádság*. Perhaps Bornemisza believed *imádság* to be a form of “adoration”, typical of the pre-Reformation church. He regarded “charms” as actions of the Devil, and in one sentence he hints that Roman Catholic priests knew (and perhaps were using or teaching) such charms. Similar accusations were common in the polemical literature in the late sixteenth century: both Protestants and Catholics said that the other party was committing idolatry, acting as servants of the Devil or the Antichrist, using malefic magic, and so on.

The eight charm texts include all the basic elements of later Hungarian (peasant) healing charms,³ and their form is not verse, but highly coordinated sentences. The vocabulary of the texts is Christian throughout: Almighty God, Our Lord, Blessed Virgin, Holy Mother Mary, Paradise, Jesus, the apostles, martyrs and saints, the River Jordan, the crown of thorns, Saint John the Baptist, and so on are mentioned in them. It is important to notice that the performance of the charms was not carried out by any melodic *singing*, but by *reciting* the text.

It is not at all surprising that several generations of Hungarian philologists have studied the works of Bornemisza (once an excellent student of Greek and Latin in the universities of Vienna, Padua, Venice and Wittenberg), looking for sources of the charms. His “devil lore” was a typical variant of Lutheran demonology. But they could not find any indirect or direct textual source for Bornemisza’s eight “charms”. We have to admit that in the years before 1578 in Upper Hungary, the above-mentioned village woman, (Tardoskeddi) B. Szerencse, knew the Hungarian texts of the charms by virtue of their everyday use, and not from theological or literary knowledge. The style of the Hungarian charm texts is identical to those from recent Hungarian folklore fieldwork. I am not, of course, saying that Bornemisza’s charm texts do not originate in the European learned or clerical tradition—I simply stress that we have not found direct written sources of the texts of the eight “Bornemisza” charms.

³ They fit the classification published in Pócs 1985–1986.

4. Another very lucky coincidence is that a prolific preacher and writer, the Vicar of the Franciscans in Hungary, Oswaldus de Lasko (Osvát Laskai, who lived from about 1450 to 1511), published a three-volume book *Biga salutis* (the title means “the two-horse chariot of salvation”) in several editions, which was, before 1508, printed in Hagenau, Germany. The Latin work (number one in the list of religious handbooks mentioned by Rabelais in *Pantagruel* (1553), book 2, chapter 7) is a collection of sermons arranged according to the feasts of the whole ecclesiastical year. Like other works of Laskai, it is one of the major sources of printed exempla in Europe. According to the preface it was meant for village priests, who could translate the narratives into the vernacular.⁴ Laskai’s manuscript was ready by about 1498, and most probably it was written in Pest. We find in the Latin text of *Biga salutis* fourteen glosses in the Hungarian language. One of these is the following: “Sexta species superstitionis dicitur carminantia, i.e. divinatio per carminiacos. Carminatores sive carminatrices sunt vulgo *baiolas*: qui per verba conantur tollere maleficium, vel aliquos reducere ad sanitatem.” Laskai here is saying that *baiolas* (today: *bájolás*) is the sixth kind of superstition, which is designated as singing carmina (*carminantia*) i.e. “divination by small carmina”. Its experts, men (*carminatores*) and women (*carminatrices*), are described as inflicting *maleficium*, “spell, harm”, and others as damaging the health of persons (quoted after Berrár and Sándor 1984, 99b).

Without any doubt the Latin word *carmen* was used here by Laskai with the meaning “charm text”.

Another important two-volume collection of Sunday sermon sketches (at least influenced, if not copied, by the Franciscans), is a Latin codex from Hungary, *Sermones Dominicales* (Sunday Sermons); vol. I, the *Budapesti Kódex* (about 1456), which has altogether 6,200 (!) Hungarian words as glosses. These bulky volumes were also made for priests, who had to preach in Hungarian, with the help of Latin text collections. One of the glosses is the following: “*incantatio*: *baýolas*”. That is why we can say that *bájolás* had in Hungary a widely known meaning of *incantatio*, “saying or singing charms”, at least from about

⁴ Laskai’s (and Pelbartus de Temeswar’s, mentioned later) exempla are included in Frederic C. Tubach’s *Index Exemplorum* (Tubach 1968).

1456 to about 1578. More precisely we can say that the Hungarian *bájolás* texts were used at that time for “healing enchantment”.

5. In medieval Latin documents from Hungary similar important terms were used.⁵

5.1. *Carmen* was used also in its “magical” meaning. The then famous Latin humanist and poet, Ianus Pannonius (*Elegiarum liber* II, 8) wrote “Fac tamen occultis ea dona carere venenis, / at magicum certe carmen habere queunt” (So make her gifts free of hidden poisons / although they are certainly able to have a magical charm), and in the same elegy, he mentions a “charm” connected with the Sun and the Moon (ibid.) “Carmines sol pallet; traducunt carmina messes, / e coelo lunam carmina saepe trahunt” (a charm pales the sun, charms produce the harvest, and charms often draw the moon down from the sky). In general the Latin word *carmen* could have meant different things in medieval and Renaissance Hungary: for example human song, the song of birds, songs in music, an air, or even a poem, and in legal language a document or decision. Its “magical” meaning occurred only in sophisticated poetry, and cannot be extended to folklore charms.

5.2. Furthermore, *incantatio* has definitely also a *charming* context. *Incantamentum* means “magic, fascination”—see, for example, the sentence in the historical work *Rerum Ungaricarum decades* (book II. Chapter 8, paragraph 44, written about 1496) by the Italian humanist Antonio Bonfini, who worked at the court of King Matthias Corvinus: “Divinationibus, auguriis, veneficiis incantamentisque admodum obnoxios esse dicunt Tartaros” (The Tartars are very prone to fortune-telling, prophecy, witchcraft and charms).

An *incantans* (in a church document from 1494) should be sent to the bishop, together with other dubious persons: “mittendi sunt ad episcopum... incantans, testis iniquus et convictus, deflorator... veneficus.” In the summary of the church history of Pannonhalma, 1522, there is a warning: “ne vocem audiat incantatum.”

⁵ The following data were taken from *Lexicon latinitatis Medii Aevi* (Boronkai etc. 1987) s.v.

The word *incantatio* has in Hungary two meanings. It represents one kind of magical activity (see the famous report in the Hungarian chronicle from the fourteenth century, about the “heathen revolt” (1061) in Hungary, when the supposed leader, Janus, collected around him a group of various kinds of magical specialists of the “old faith”: “Ianus... ritum patris sequendo congregavit ad se multos magos et phitonissas et aruspices, per quorum incantationes valde gratiosus erat apud dominos” (John... observing the ritual of the forefathers, invited around the magicians, the forecasters and entrail soothsayers, through whom charms have been much in favour among the ruling men). The second meaning of the same word is the “power of magic” in general: “de incantationibus herbarum” (on plant charms)—as we can read in the book of sermons by the famous Franciscan writer Pelbartus de Temeswar (about 1435–1504) *Pomerium* (limits of the topic) (part VI, chapter C.—first printed in Hagenau 1498). The Latin word was used in Hungary according to the common European tradition, making distinctions between various groups of “magicians”. The “first book written in Hungary” (by about 1030), the *Deliberationes* of Bishop Gerardus, mentions “... et fornicationis et furoris et phitonis et divinationis et incantationis et belligerationis et discidii” (and whoredom and frenzy and seer and magic and charm and warfare and brandishing) (see the recent edition: Karácsonyi and Szegfű 1999, 502 = *Liber VIII*. 126r; in fact on the same page we find twice the same list of “evil spirits”). Ger(h)ardus/Gellért (977–1046) was an Italian Benedictine monk who lived in Hungary from about 1023. In his work he used extensively the contemporary handbooks of theology, especially that of Isidore of Seville, and so we cannot automatically assume that all the terms that he used refer to actually existing human groups in Hungary in the mid-eleventh century—on the other hand his learned terminology could have influenced the language of other clerics in Hungary.

Incantator/incantrix was listed among other criminals (“fures, latrones, incendiarios, incantatores vel incantatrices...” (thieves, brigands, fire-raisers, male and female charmers) in a document from 1387, and also to denote an itinerant woman “seer” (!), whom we know by name in another document from 1409 (“Dominam Kysber fytonissam et incantatorem” (Mrs. Kysber the seer woman and wandering charmer)! instead of “incantricem” (she-charmer) / “vagabundam”). The *Sermones Dominicales* (vol. I, 333, about 1456),

to which we have already referred, gives a similar list of “magos, incantatores et incantrices” (magicians and male and female charmers). In a legal document from the town of Ödenburg/Sopron in western Hungary (1429) we read the following: “Johannem... et relictam Thome... sedutricem, incantatricem et fitonissam pro publicis malefactoribus” (John and the widow of Thomas... a seductress, female charmer, seer woman for the common ill-doers). Among the documents of the Forgách family (from 1525) we find a decision that reads as follows: “[Ut] intoxicatores, magos, incantatores et incantatrices...” (that the poisoners, magicians, male and female charmers...).

The verb *incanto* also occurs in the documents: “Prudens Christianus... dum incantatur, unam aurem et alia, terra obstruit” (the prudent Christian... when charms are performed should stuff both ears with earth) (about 1456); [Hannibal] “nobis sapienter incantantibus parere et obedire” (for us it is wiser to submit to the charms and to obey them) (in a letter by Archbishop Petrus de Warda between 1490 and 1498). In both cases this represents a very general understanding of the word, without specific reference to ritual in Hungary.

5.3. Summarising the Latin documents from Hungary we may draw two conclusions. First, an “international” set of terms (from *magus*, *veneficus* and *phytonissa*/*fitonissa* to *incantator/incantatrix*) was generally known in Hungary in the Middle Ages, during the Renaissance, and in the sixteenth century, among both Roman Catholics and Protestants. If we then find a Hungarian term used, it might be understood only with reference to the various terms for *magicians*. Second, in some cases we find a distinction between male and female *magicians*. The most interesting case is the *incantator/incantatrix*. If the texts explicitly mention a female involved in magic, we should take the distinction seriously.

6. We need to make a brief analysis of the term *bűvös* too.⁶ *Bűvöl* as a verb means “incantare”, *bűvölés* “incantatio”, *bűvölő* “incantatrix”, *bűvös* “magus, maleficus”, and *bűvös-bájos* “veneficus”. The references are mostly from fifteenth-century documents, which is self-evident, because starting from that time there was an impressive

⁶ See the data in Benkő 1967 and Berrár and Károly 1984.

increase of manuscripts in Hungary. *Bűvölés* in those manuscripts is a general term, but in some cases it has a more specific meaning. For example, in the manuscript of *Gyöngyösi szótártöredék* (a “fragment”—letters from *A* to *C*—of a Latin-Hungarian dictionary, from between 1525 and 1556, with 10,400 Hungarian words in total) we read the following sentence: “Carmen quandoque incantatio dicitur: Bűvöles, vara/z/slas” (The poem is sometimes called an incantation).

If we check the data of the reduplicative forms *bűbáj* (and *bűbajos*) from 1565, 1578, 1585 and other years, we may conclude that the two components of the compound word mean “magic in general” + “its special form”, and the second one might be connected with use of (charming) texts.

7. An unsurpassed treasury of Hungarian historical vocabulary is the *Erdélyi Magyar Szótörténeti Tár*, collected by the late Attila T. Szabó. Published from 1976 onwards (13 volumes to date, up to the entry VAR), it contains more than one million (!) references to Hungarian words (in Transylvanian documents) from about 1550 until the second half of the nineteenth century. The collection was primarily made from archival documents (i.e. not from literary works or dictionaries), and thus represents the “everyday written language”.

There is no reference in the dictionary volumes to the isolated form of the word: *báj*. Even *bajos* or *bájolás* are unmentioned in the documents (see vol. I. P. 549b. [Bucharest, 1976] s.v. “bájolás”, in a document from 1748). Or, more precisely, only compound words are attestable there.⁷ The adjective/noun *bűvös* (1593), the noun (*nomen actionis*) *bűvölés* (1574, 1582) and the verb *bűvöl* (1593) occur rarely, in only four documents. The reduplicative form, however, is registered more frequently, in about thirty documents. See, for example, the following: the noun (*nomen agentis*) *bűvös-bajos* (in documents from the following years) 1592, 1593, 1595, 1639, 1664, 1673, 1674, 1696, 1743, 1745, 1748, 1765 and 1796; the noun (*nomen actionis*) *bűvölés-bájolás* 1582, 1591, 1592, 1748 and 1793; the noun (*nomen actionis*) *bűvös bájoskodás* 1670, 1674 and 1745; the verb *bűvö-bájol* 1574; the verb *bűvös-bajoskodik* 1592 and 1674. Most of the documents are from witch trials or other

⁷ All the data in this paragraph are printed in *idem*. Vol. I, 1127–8.

criminal law documents. Sometimes the word *bűvös-bájos* is a curse or a negative reference to a person, most often to a woman. See, for example, “Cassai Catustól hallottam hogy bűvös bájos boszorkány kurvának szidta az Nyári Márton Annát” (Cassai Catus was scolding Nyári Márton Anná as a *bűvös bájos* witch whore) (1593). In some other cases *bűvös bájos* is included among the other irreligious or non-law-abiding persons, connected with the Devil or witchcraft. See, for example, *oldó, kötő, varázsló, bűvös bájos, hitegető, sántító, vakító* (solving, binding, performing magic, *bűvös bájos*, making false promises, making people lame or blind), 1670. The trial texts relate, just after that statement, that the accused woman wanted to give others her knowledge and skill; she had twelve sons in black robes, who danced around the country by night.

These Transylvanian sources do not speak directly about charms, and, from about 1584 on, the terms are drawn more and more from the witch-hunt terminology, and usually were said about women (and said by other women).⁸

8. In later dictionaries, for example the *Dictionarium Latino-Hungaricum* by Ferenc Páriz Pápai (1708, corrected and enlarged by Péter Bod, 1767), we still find entries such as “Báj, bűbáj: *Incantatio, Magia, Veneficium. Zauberey, Hexerey*—Bájolás: *Incantatio, Zauberey*—Bájolom: *Incanto, Incantatione usor. Ich bezaubere, brauche Zauberey*—Bájos: *Veneficus, -ca. Incantator. ein Zauberer, Zauberin*—Bájosság, Bűbájosság: *Incantatio, Magia. Zauberey*”⁹—but these are only from Transylvania

⁸ One could add that Attila T. Szabó’s dictionary (*Erdélyi Magyar Szótörténeti Tár [1976–2009]*) is still NOT complete. And the witch trial publications from Hungary contain thousands of further important historical data. For example publications from the gigantic research project by Éva Pócs, editing “all” witch-trial texts from Hungary, may have a lot of data that are crucial for understanding the semantic development of words, e.g., *bűvös, bájos* etc. Unfortunately the volumes published so far do not have an index of words/terms. See, for example, Bessenyei 2000, 122–3, from a Transylvanian witch trial (1639) with the words *bűvös, bájos, bájol*—which are missing from the dictionary of T. Szabó, despite the fact that in 1975 he was engaged in publishing those same witch-trial documents! This remark is not a complaint—I simply wish to warn readers that there is no full index for a historical vocabulary of Hungarian witchcraft (or magic).

⁹ See 17–18 in the second part of the reprint edition (Hargittay ed.): *Dictionarium Hungarico-Latinum* 1995.

and are more lexicological than folklore/folklife items. If we look up the Latin terms in the first parts of the dictionaries, we will find other complicated and mixed references between Latin and Hungarian terms. (In another paper about the historical interpretation possibilities of Hungarian folk belief terms, I have shown that the wording of the dictionaries is one of the most important cultural-historical sources in Hungarian. However, dictionaries borrow their entries mostly from already existing dictionaries, and if they are very useful, for example for translating, they are nevertheless extremely difficult to use for drawing quick conclusions about the cultural-historical stratification of belief systems [Voigt 2004, 165–75]).

For example, Páriz Pápai and Bod give the following entry in a shortened form (1708–1767, 89 in the first part of the reprint edition):

“Carmen *Vers* [poem]. Item *Bűbáj, Igézet* [Bewitching]. ... Intendere carmen aliqui *Valaki ellen verset írni* [to write a poem against somebody]. Carmen magicum *Bűjölés, Bájolás*. Carmen ferule *Ijesztő nóta. Bagoly húholás* [frightening poem, owl’s hooting]. Carmina Sybillae *Sibilla jövődölési* [Sibylline oracles] ... Carmen a carendo lanam [a poem from the tool separating the wool] *Gereben, Héhel* [card, wool-comb].” I am convinced that every part of the entry will need a careful interpretation, and we should not say that in Hungary in 1767 a *carmen* was more “bewitching” than “hooting of an owl” or “combing the wool”.

9. If we want to sum up the Hungarian data concerning *báj* and *bájolás*, we might say that in medieval Hungary the “art of magic” was expressed by two old words: *báj*- and *bű/v*-. Verbal charms (against illnesses) were very often used in the sixteenth century, and then the “magical” word *báj* was a good candidate for naming it. Then *bű*- was mainly understood as the general term for magic. The double forms (as *bűvös-bájos*) in the Middle Ages were used as general terms for all kinds of “magical” activity. From the sixteenth century the *bűvös-bájos* terminology was understood more and more in terms of witchcraft. The texts of the charms were written in a completely Christian vocabulary. We can distinguish some territorial differences in the terminology, and the interaction between learned and folk traditions, but, without more complete publication of witch-trial texts we cannot yet give a detailed history of charm terminology in Hungary.

10. Regarding the Turkic origin of the two keywords in Hungarian (*báj* and *bű*), the first can be derived from Old Turkic **bā*, “to bind”, in the practical meaning of the word. Only Chagatay *baj* has three meanings, “Band, Zauber, Bezauberung”, and the above-mentioned Hungarian data reflect the same semantic development (Räsänen 1969, 53a).¹⁰ As for the second word, the following parallels were registered: Uighur and Chagatay *bögü*, “Weiser”, Chagatay *bügi*, “Zauberei”, Osman *böjü*, *büjü*, *büj*, “Hexenmeister, Hexe, Zauberer”, Osman *buyu*, “Hexerei”, and Cumanian *bügü*, “Weiser, Prophet”, and it has associations with the Mongolian *böge*, *büge*, “Schamane, Hexenmeister” (ibid., 83a).¹¹ The Hungarian *bű*- (and also *bölcs*, “wise person”) shows a clear semantic development: from a general meaning “wise” to later more specific meanings. The same explanation can be applied to the Turkic comparative data.

11. The history of the current Hungarian word for “charm”, *ráolvasás*, is an interesting topic too. The verb *olvas* today simply means “to read”, and *rá-* is a common directional prefix “towards, upon”. In medieval Hungary the word was used in its primary meaning, but very soon came to be used also in the “clerical/legal” meaning. A Franciscan codex from the end of the fifteenth century, *Guary-kódex*, contains religious meditations, and on page 92 of the manuscript we read, at the end of an exorcism account: “Es immar hogy az confessor rea olvasta volna az oldozatot” (When then the confessor was reading over her [the woman] the absolution).¹² *Ráolvas* as a legal term was used also in the succeeding centuries.

The simple form (*olvas*, “reads”) maintained a “legal” meaning too. In a process in Transylvania (1570) the expression *Sententiat olvasni*, “reading a sentence”, occurs (T. Szabó, (1976–), vol. IX 1997, 1065, part 3). The noun *olvasás*, “the reading of something” has also been attested in similar cases, from about 1600 until the nineteenth century. Thus it was very simple to use the same verb for the practice of *reading/saying charms*.

¹⁰ As the reader can see, his orthography is not the same as that of Hungarian linguists.

¹¹ In his very clever summary Clauson does not mention any further correspondences (Clauson 1972, 324–25).

¹² See the facsimile edition (Szabó 1944, 92, 6th line from the top).

12. Philologists have published about 60 Hungarian *charms* or *healing, protecting prayers* from before the seventeenth century, among them the texts in Bornemisza's book, mentioned above (for their list, see Pócs 1985–1986, vol. II, 667). On the one hand that impressive number is due to the changing historical and cultural circumstances of that time. The sixteenth century was one of the most troublesome in Hungary, with Ottoman invasions bringing to a bloody end (in the Battle of Mohács, 1526) the independent Hungarian kingdom, with the Reformation in Hungary, and an increase in the number of manuscripts and printed texts. In some cases these contain instructions or parallel texts in Latin and Hungarian. In one of the three “charms from Bagonya”¹³ (1488) a horse-protecting text (XV. 7. 8) gives the following instruction: “... cum ista oracione” (with the following prayer). Another horse-healing text in Hungarian, from the beginning of the sixteenth century (XV. 20) ends with the words “in nomine patris. Tria pater noster et ave maria tot vel unam missam gloriosissimae mariae virginis ad honorem” (In the name of the Father. Three times the Lord's Prayer and Ave Marias, together with a Holy Mass in honour of the most glorious Virgin Mary). Two texts (between 1511 and 1526, XIII. 8 and XIII. 22) belonged to King János Szapolyai (Zápolya). In a book, *Postilla Guillermi super Epistolas et Evangelia...* (William's Homily on the Epistles and Gospels) (Augsburg, 1475, also in later editions, e.g. 1512) from a Hungarian Paulite monastery, written by about 1516, on the inner page of the cover there are eight handwritten charm texts, in Latin or in Hungarian, or in both languages. The instructions are “modern” for their time, and the magical texts contain Latin, Greek and Hebrew words. For example, on the sixth line in XIII. 82, in a text otherwise written in Hungarian, there occurs the following: *el ely elyon ihus tetragramaton agia alpha et o*. (Holy, the holy, most holy Jesus, tetragrammaton [four-letter name of God] holy alpha and omega). The *Peer-kódex* (some years before 1526, a compendium of devotional texts for a single person, Simon, from Paulite or Premonstratensian sources)¹⁴ contains nine elaborate charms, among others

¹³ Here and in the following cases see the texts in Pócs's book, cited above, giving in brackets her classification number.

¹⁴ See the recent edition *Peer-kódex* (Peer Codex). In the introduction there is a summary of the text history of the codex, with some references to charm

against weapons, for liberation from jail, and so on. Here XIV. 102. 1 and 2 (a charm against fever) show the Latin origin and its word-for-word Hungarian translation:

xpus regnat +
xpus imperat +
xpus vincit +
leo de tribu Iuda +
libera symonem ab omni malo et febre
hac in nomine pris + et filij + + spscti + Amen.
[Christ rules
Christ commands
Christ conquers
lion from the tribe of Judah
release Simon from
all evil and this fever
in the name of the Father + and of the Son +
+ and of the Holy Spirit + amen]

criftus orzagol +
criftus paranchol +
criftus goz +
orozlan iuda nemzetebol
zabadoychad megh fymont
menden nemo gonoztul
ees ez hydegleleltol
at'anak + es fywnak +
es zenth leleknek newebe +
pater: nr. Aue Maria Credo
[the Lord's Prayer, the Ave Maria, Apostles' Creed]

13. Among the sixteenth-century Hungarian charms the texts published by Bornemisza (see above) are practically the only ones that might be connected with the “popular” use of magical texts. (I cannot

(and Hungarian folklore) traditions, quoting Zsuzsanna Erdélyi's views (19; 27–32) there is a synoptic table of the possible text sources and parallels. As regards the charms, only Zsuzsanna Erdélyi's publication is mentioned.

give a final answer to the following plausible question: is it only by chance that he was using the compound term *bájoló + imádság* for those?) All the others are “upper-class”, “written” and “European” lore texts. Ágnes Bolgár (1934, 39) and others have tried to characterise the interest in charms in the sixteenth century in Hungary. According to her view, in spite of some foreign parallels, the most interesting Hungarian texts belong to the folk tradition. Her source material was considerably smaller than that of today. Éva Pócs has avoided drawing sharp social and cultural-historical conclusions. Because she was printing thousands of later Hungarian (“peasant”) texts, and Zsuzsanna Erdélyi published similarly hundreds of (“peasant”) magical healing texts or paraliturgical prayers (she usually calls them *archaic folk prayers*),¹⁵ the distinction between the different social strata is not very clear in Hungary.

14. But from all the above we can draw only one conclusion: *báj* and *bájolás*—in spite of their excellent Turkic etymology—are not a “survival” of Old Turkic magic (!)¹⁶ in Hungary. From the early data we can conclude that the origin of the charm texts in Hungary was the European and Christian tradition of benedictions and maledictions.

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¹⁵ In several publications: Erdélyi 1999.

¹⁶ Unfortunately, the otherwise very erudite handbook that describes the traditional Turkic genres well—Boratav 1964, II—does not have a special chapter devoted to charms.

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CHAPTER VI

The Marginality of Charms in Medieval England

Lea Olsan

At the bottom of a page in a fourteenth-century copy of Gilbert the Englishman's academic medical book, a reader has written the following charm:

Take these two verses and tie them on the right arm
with the Lord's Prayer. And these [verses] are,
"Amara. tum. taturi. postos. sicalos. sicaluri.
Ely. poli. caritas. polyly. pilinique. linarras."¹

This charm, introduced as a practical cure (*empericum*) for mania, is added to copies of Gilbert's influential thirteenth-century *Compendium medicine*. The lengthy and learned medical treatise itself contains only ten charms within the text.²

The marginal placement is in one sense characteristic of medieval academic medicine. Some medical authorities rejected charms in

¹ "Empericum. In hiis egritudinibus est mania. Accipiantur isti duo versus et ligentur in dextro brachio cum oracione dominica. et sunt hii. Amara. tum. taturi. postos. sicalos. sicaluri. /Ely. poli. caritas. polyly. pilinique . linarras." A small cross appears above each word of the charm in Oxford, New College MS 165, fol. 70 bottom margin in a late fourteenth-century hand. I am grateful to M. McVaugh for bringing this charm to my attention. I wish to thank N. van Loo, Librarian of New College, Oxford, for facilitating my access to the manuscript.

² On Gilbert's charms, see McVaugh 2003, 319–45, and Olsan 2003, 343–66.

theory because they were not based on reason or natural causation;³ others included them occasionally, but expressed doubts about their efficacy. Gilbert was one of these latter. From the thirteenth century, medieval medicine was based on the rationalist thinking of Galenic medicine, reinvigorated by an influx of Latin translations of Arabic commentaries on Aristotle and ancient medicine. This Scholastic medicine emphasised humoral understanding of disease and a strict rationalism that entailed the suppression of traditional healing modes—although a few charms circulated among highly reputed doctors, who authorised their use through their attribution to named famous physicians. In principle, medical therapies like charms were associated with “empirics” and “old women” and were consequently rejected. At the same time, famous doctors and teachers of medicine like Gilbert did in fact document charms to treat wounds, bleeding of various kinds, epilepsy, impotence and a few other problems, on the basis that some remedies might be effective even though they were not derived from humoral principles.

The amuletic charm for mania in the Oxford manuscript seems especially appropriate to a learned medical text: it consists of “two verses” that, although nonsensical, sound like Latin, the language of Gilbert’s text.

Amara. tum. taturi. postos. sicalos. siculari.

Ely. poli. caritas. polyly. pilinique. linarras.

When spoken aloud the rhyming syllables in the half-lines (tatu-ri/sicula-ri and carit-as/linarr-as), the alliteration (“t” and “s” in the first line; “l” and “p” in the second) and the alteration of vowel sounds combine two rhythmical lines, each with a pause in the middle. Moreover, the words *caritas* and *Ely* have Christian roots as the Latin for “charity” and the Greek word “eleison” (have mercy) or the Gospel word “Eli” in Christ’s last words on the cross, and “sicalos siculari” echoes the liturgical phrase “secula seculorum” meaning “world without end”, so that the nonsensical formula when spoken sounds

³ Famously, Guy de Chauliac, Bernard of Gordon and Arnau of Vilanova, although their attitudes were complex and varied from time to time. See McVaugh 2003, 320–22, 329 and 336, and Olsan 2003, 349 and 352–53.

vaguely benedictional. The impenetrable words convey a sense of secrecy and suggest that the formula itself deploys an occult power (*virtus*).⁴ An *empericum* such as this treatment for mental disorder lacked a rational, humoral explanation for its efficacy, but could be theoretically justified for use in learned medicine through its particular *virtus*: that is to say, its “specific property”, its secret power, proven by its previous effectiveness. Cures that relied on occult properties were understood to be unique; their efficacy depended not on their known qualities and properties, but on unseen forces. Secondly, if a well-reputed physician or surgeon witnessed to a charm or prayer’s efficacy by recording it in his book, then it was more likely to be accepted and passed on by another doctor. Scholastic medicine proudly depended on and was quick to cite worthy authorities. Whoever wrote the mania charm in the margin took the first step and effectively verified its utility. Although charms and prayers were relatively peripheral in the learned *compendia* of medieval medicine, certain Latin-literate physicians, whose practices included patients from different social classes, are known to have employed charms without inhibitions.⁵

The mania cure displays certain aspects of orality. The oral features of the incantation itself and the instructions to speak the Lord’s Prayer (*oratione dominica*) while tying the amulet to the patient’s right arm bear witness to an intended oral performance and distribution to patients. The recorder of the charm refers to the incantatory formula as spoken verses (*duo versus*). Even though the orality of the cure is obscured by the materiality of the amulet⁶ (and also the written

⁴ Two views of occult power developed in the thirteenth century. One emphasised its source in the particular or specific properties of natural forms, on which see McVaugh 2003, 334–5, and Olsan, 2003, 346–8; another stressed the importance of keeping knowledge of occult powers secret from all but the wise. See Weill-Parot, 2006, 151–70. Medical use of the power of words in incantations and rituals for healing had earlier precedents in Late Antique and Salernitan therapies as well as Christian benedictions for the sick. On Christian statements concerning the power of words, see Delaurenti 2007, 23–38 and 68–103.

⁵ Thomas Fayreford, for example, on whom see Jones 1998, 175–6, and Jones, 1995, 49–52.

⁶ On written amulets, see Skemer 2006, especially 125–169 on production and use.

record of the cure in the book), it should not be overlooked. In terms of utility, the amulet itself is secondary as the vehicle of application, while the oral-aural power of the words of the incantation constitute its primary means of effectiveness. The incantatory words, spoken under the aegis of Christianity, as indicated by the placement of small crosses above each word in the manuscript as well as by the added prayer, bring into focus a Christian conception of healing power. The amulet preserves the spoken words and serves as an assurance that the written words act continuously over the sick to protect them from mental illnesses, as if the words were being repeated aloud.⁷ This idea that words might have the power to protect and heal had early medical precedents,⁸ as well as religious precedents that proved consistently productive among the pious.⁹ Gilbert recommended the popular *Three good brothers* Charm, for instance, for the cure of wounds.

Personal presence required by this amuletic charm is an attribute of orality. As prescribed, the spoken words and ritual acts must be carried out by the healer on the patient. The amulet acts as an affirmation and reminder of the ritual.¹⁰ Whenever this charm is put to use, it will have been removed from its textual source in the medical book, and then brought into the circumstances of the life of a patient by being spoken and rewritten on a strip tied to the patient's body. A reciprocity exists between the charm recorded in the *Compendium* and the applied (spoken and attached) text: the charm may be recorded again in other books if it is believed to be worth preserving.

This thirteenth-century charm text thus well illustrates some of the issues pursued in this paper under the term "marginality"—its marginal location in the manuscript, its questionable value as a medical treatment within the context of Scholastic medicine, and the reciprocal relationship between the textual and oral modes of transmission.

Before proceeding, I want to make one more point about the marginality of this charm in terms of its location in the manuscript. The charm's relationship to the text that it accompanies differs strikingly from what we find in the Anglo-Saxon examples discussed below. This

⁷ For a different view, see Arnovick 2006, 134.

⁸ See Wilcox and Riddle 1995, 1–50.

⁹ For a wealth of examples, see Skemer 2006, chapter 2, 75–124.

¹⁰ See Jones and Olsan 2000, 280–4.

charm (Amara. tum. taturi. postos. sicalos. siculari. / Ely. poli. caritas. polyly. pilinique. linarras.) has been added to the bottom margin of at least four manuscript copies of Gilbert's *Compendium*.¹¹ It is one of several marginal additions first added to Gilbert's book not long after he completed it.¹² About half of the other marginal additions came to be written into the body of the text and can be found (sometimes still labelled as additions: *additio*) in the printed edition of 1510.¹³ The significant point for this paper is that the charm was probably intended to be incorporated into the body of the text. Therefore it does not represent a casual note of only one reader or the deliberate use of convenient marginal space, but rather a potential supplement to the chapter on mania.

Much of what we know about medieval charms in England has been built upon the work of collectors and studies of individual charms and types.¹⁴ Recently, scholars have focused on the question of how charms participate in wider domains of knowledge, such as medicine, magic, or religion. In the case of medieval charms, such work entails renewed study of manuscript contexts.¹⁵ This paper takes its impetus from the latter sort of study. Based on the evidence of charms from specific manuscript environments, I aim to clarify how charms participated in medieval

¹¹ I know this thanks to M. R. McVaugh. The manuscripts are as follows: Oxford, New College 165, as above; Bruges 469, fol. 66r; New Haven, Yale University Medical School Library, Cushing-Whitney 19, fol. 54v; Oxford, Bodleian 720, fol. 48v.

¹² For an account of marginal additions, see McVaugh, 2010, 316–18. The charm is, however, not discussed.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Major collections of charms in the English tradition are Cockayne 1864–66; Grendon 1909, 105–237; Storms 1948; Sheldon [Parnell] 1978; Hunt 1990; Keiser 1998, 3669–76 and 3863–82; Roper 2005. For recent studies of individual charms and types, see Schultz 2003; Bozóky 2003, and Roper 2003. A thought-provoking analysis of charm structures found in Hungary appears in Pócs 1986. In this paper, judgements regarding the right and wrong uses of charms made by preachers, law-makers, learned physicians and influential church fathers are not discussed, but for a thorough survey of early pastoral materials, see Filotas 2005.

¹⁵ Rider 2006; Klaassen and Phillips 2006, 134–76; Jolly 2007, 135–83. I am very grateful to Karen Jolly for allowing me to read her article prior to its publication.

culture at specific moments. Between the middle of the eleventh century, when the marginalia were probably added to an Anglo-Saxon version of Bede's *History* (see below), and the middle of the sixteenth century, by which time deliberate censorship of medieval charms in fifteenth-century remedy books seems to have taken place, charms (by which I mean here formulaic verbal rituals expected to bring about specific results through their performance) appear in a variety of manuscript contexts in a variety of guises. Compilers, copyists and subsequent readers identify many examples by the terms "carmen", "charm" or the like, a practice that indicates a contemporary sense of the genre; nevertheless, we do not find such a thing as free-standing collections of charms in medieval codices. This circumstance has prompted this attempt to articulate the marginality of medieval charms in various forms.

In this paper the term marginality indicates the following: (1) the location of charm texts on the margins, blank spaces and fly-leaves of manuscripts,¹⁶ (2) the questionable value of charms in Scholastic medicine, as discussed above, (3) the identity of charms in relation to other genres, (4) the movement of charms back and forth over the permeable border between oral performance and literate record, and finally (5) the result of the suppression of charms through manuscript censorship.

Manuscript Margins: an Anglo-Saxon Case of Deliberate Placement

As we have seen above, charms can be written in the margins of manuscripts as supplements to texts. Subsequent to its writing, a marginal text might be copied into the body of a text. There are other possibilities. An early English example of charms recorded in the margins of a manuscript occurs in an Anglo-Saxon copy of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, dating to the first half of the eleventh century, a book owned by the Bishop of Exeter and donated by

¹⁶ For delightful examples of marginal inscriptions in fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century books, including Elizabeth Warneford's prayers, not charms, to Apollonia, to protect against the vexation of toothache and headache, see Richmond 1993, 242–52, esp. 248–9. On the phenomenon in print culture, see Jackson 2001.

him to the Cathedral.¹⁷ Apart from a great deal of other material, an unidentified monk or priest wrote the following items in the margins: an Old English charm to cause a swarm of bees to settle (CCCC MS 41, 182),¹⁸ three charms for use when livestock has been lost or stolen¹⁹ (MS 206–208), a Latin prayer or charm for protection against fiends (MS 272),²⁰ a Latin prayer or charm for a woman's success as a mother, which includes the *sator* formula (MS 329, quoted below), and an Old English charm commonly referred to as “the journey charm” (MS 350–353).²¹ The charms and prayers, along with one medical recipe (MS 208) and three exorcistic prayers for healing (MS 326), comprise practical and spiritual rituals targeting specific problems.²²

¹⁷ Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 41. For a description, see Ker 1990, item 32, 43–5. I wish to thank G. Cannell of the Parker Library for providing access to the manuscript, now available online at: http://parkerweb.stanford.edu/parker/actions/manuscript_description_search_results.do?provenance=&textTitle=&msTitle=&decoration=&explicit=&msNo=41&language=&incipit=&rubric=. Accessed 27 June 2012.

¹⁸ The Anglo-Saxon Bee Charm can be found in Dobbie 1942, 125; for comparison with a Germanic analogue, see Elsackers 1987, 447–61.

¹⁹ Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, discerned three charms in the manuscript. See his nos. 15, 13 and 12 (the latter truncates the ms. text). Hollis 1992, 149–163, argues that the hymn text excised in Storms was copied by the scribe by mistake. Hollis posits three types for the total of eight theft charms extant from Anglo-Saxon sources. For a recent discussion of these and other texts, see Dendle 2006, 514–39. A photograph of the first (of three) manuscript pages containing these charms appear in Figure 2, 520. On these charms, see also Olsan 1999, 401–19. On the medieval Latin *crux christi* motif used repeatedly and spoken in the compass directions, see note below.

²⁰ “Wip grimnessum”, beginning “Dextera domini fecit uirtutem”, can be found in Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, no. 48, the opening lines derive from Psalm 117[118]: 16–7.

²¹ This charm can be found in Dobbie 1942, 126–8, or Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, no. 16.

²² James 1909, I, 326, identified the prayer for sore eyes as a “charm”. Like charms, each of these formulas has a specific purpose; the last two represent the cause of the pain as evil angels, each of whom are to be excluded (*exclude*). The dominant register and rhetoric of these formulas is that of prayer. A version of the prayer “Wip sarum eagum” containing the Tobit/Tobias motif appears in the *Lacnunga* (BL MS Harley 585). For a careful account of analogues, see Pettit 2001, I, 104–5, and II, 285–6. On its Tobit/Tobias motif found in Middle English charms for *hawwe* in the eye, see

The charms are meant for tending to people and property (bees, live-stock, or frightened individuals). So also is the eye remedy following the theft charms (MS 208), although it is a herb treatment. The prayers for eyes, ears and a sickness whose symptom is stomach pain (MS 326), petition divine help for sufferers from the torments of evil angels. It is significant that the prayers for healing seek to answer individual needs just as charms do.

The compiler may have been motivated by a sense of pastoral care to add these materials in the margins.²³ Perhaps these inscriptions also mark the scribe's sense of threatened ethnicity, which especially underlies the inclusion of the vernacular oral material. Michelle P. Brown writes as follows: "The need to preserve or create a perception of national identity and to conserve the vestiges of an earlier culture, including its orality, added a further spur and may well have culminated in the Anglo-Saxon anthologizing trends of the late tenth to eleventh centuries..."²⁴ The margins of Corpus 41 preserve materials that were most probably originally recorded at the time and under the conditions that Brown calls to our attention. Nor was the Anglo-Saxon culture enjoying stability subsequent to the events of the mid-eleventh century, when Viking raids had given way to Norman ones.

Besides the materials mentioned above, the other materials recorded in the margins of this manuscript comprise Latin sermons, saints' lives, masses and liturgical prayers—in short, devotional materials ultimately intended for use in communal worship and education.²⁵ The charms, prayers and remedies were evidently valued by the Anglo-Saxon scribe as much as the homiletic, devotional and liturgical materials. And R. M. Liuzza has recently demonstrated how liturgical prayers to the cross extend to practical prayers in another Anglo-Saxon manuscript.²⁶

Olsan 2004, 71. Texts of the three remedies in the Cambridge MS can be found in Storms, *Anglo-Saxon Magic*, no. A.4, A.5, A.6 on 314–5.

²³ A view supported by Grant's and Jolly's work.

²⁴ See Brown 2005, 121

²⁵ Jolly lists all the marginal materials in the order in which they occur in the manuscript in Appendix A of her article, 2007, 175–79. Tracing the theme of protection through the marginal materials including the charms, she finds "a common set of concerns and assumptions reflected in the Scribes' choices".

²⁶ British Library, MS Cotton Tiberius A.iii (Liuzza 2007, 276–320).

The Corpus manuscript formula for motherhood and painless delivery exemplifies the integration of Latin devotional forms of blessing and petition with the specific protection and instrumentality of a charm:

Creator and Sanctifier, Father and Son and Holy Spirit, who art true trinity and unity. We pray to thee, Lord most merciful Father, that this gift become your mercy, that it may be acceptable to thee for the soul of your servant, that your blessing be upon all these gifts through + Sator. arepo. tenet. opera. rotas. Lord, who made man from the beginning to increase and multiply, grant to this your servant N. [Supply her name] on earth that she may prosper and give birth without pain.²⁷

This formula of blessing incorporates the *sator* formula, which subsequently became a favourite in England in the later medieval period as a motif in childbirth charms.²⁸ This is the earliest known instance of *sator* associated with childbirth in England. The figure of the *sator*-square in Western Europe appears in Christian manuscripts of the ninth century.²⁹ Its occurrence in this Anglo-Saxon manuscript probably results

²⁷ "Creator et sanctificator pater et filius et spiritus sanctus qui es uera trinitas et unitas precamur te domine clematissime pater ut elemosina ista fiat misericordia tua ut accepta sit tibi pro anime['+a' added above] famuli tui ut sit benedictio tua super omnia dona ista per + Sator. arepo. tenet. opera. rotas. Dominus qui ab initio fecisti hominem et dedisti ei in adiutorium similem sibi ut crescere['tur' added above] et multicare['tur' added above]. da super terram huic famulam tuam .N. ut prospere et sine dolore par-turit." [My transcription. Abbreviations are expanded silently.] Cambridge, Corpus Christi College MS 41, 329. For a photograph of the text, see Jolly, 2007, 183.

²⁸ Keiser, *Manual* 3673 and 3873.

²⁹ It is useful to separate ancient uses of the *sator* square, which differ in meaning and significance from those found in medieval Christian contexts. The first medieval occurrence of the square that I know of is in a Carolingian manuscript dated to 822 (Paris, BN, Cod. Lat. 1505, fol. 213v). See Ernst 1991, 429–59, especially 436. The square appears alongside the *crux christi* formula explicitly to trap a thief in a twelfth-century Munich manuscript (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, MS Clm. 536, fol. 84v), *ibid.*, 437, fig. 143, and in one quarter of a page divided by a cross, *ibid.*, 446, fig. 144. The Pater Noster anagram in the shape of a cross, derived from within the *sator* square, does not appear in these early manuscripts.

from its being associated with the veneration of the cross as a source of divine protection and power.³⁰ The word “Sator” also appears in Anglo-Saxon England in the first line of a hymn addressed to Christ who rules in the “summit of heaven” (*caeli arce*). The hymn composed by the Greek Archbishop of Canterbury, Theodore (602–690), or under his supervision,³¹ begins, “Sancte sator, suffragator, / legum lator, largus dator” (Holy creator, sustainer, / lawgiver, bountiful provider).³² Theodore’s opening resonates with the Latin first words of the prayer charm in Corpus 41 (*Creator et Sanctificator*), where the blessing is sought through (“per”) the *sator* formula, where the latter is identified with the universal power of the *crux christi*. Theodore’s poem suggests that Christians read *sator* as *Creator* in a devout and orthodox Christian sense.

Prayers similar to these with which the *sator* formula occurs here circulated in tenth-century continental Germanic manuscripts.³³ The

³⁰ Jolly 2007 makes this point based on her analysis of the unifying protective themes of the marginal materials. The Munich manuscript provides evidence for the specific association of the *sator* square with the *crux christi* invocation to the cross to bring back a thief. The *sator*-square is framed by the following lines: “Veniat illi laqueus. / que ignorat et / captio quia abscondit? / apprehendat eum / et laqueum cadat ipsum.” Beside the square the formula reads as follows: “Crux christi ab oriente reducat te .N. / Crux christi a meridiano reducat te .N. / Crux christi ab aquilone reducat te .N. / Crux christi ab occidente reducat te .N. / Crux christi abscondita fuit et ab Helena / inventa est. sic inveniatur fugitiuus/ iste per uirtutem sancte crucis. / Adiuro terra per patrem et filium et spiritum sanctum et per sepulchrum domini ut eum non retineas .N. sed citissime redire facias ad me.” (My transcription from Ernst’s Figure 143. I have expanded the abbreviations silently. Clm. 536 is now accessible online at the Münchener Digitalisierungszentrum Digitale Bibliothek.) On the *crux christi* formula in the Anglo-Saxon theft charms, see Hill 1978, 488–90, and Liuzza 2007, 292–3.

³¹ M. Lapidge 1996, 241–2, writes, “the ‘Sancte sator’ (ICL, no. 14640) enjoyed a wide manuscript circulation, both in England and the Continent.” On this poem’s English origins and continental circulation, see *ibid.*, 240–4.

³² Lapidge’s translation, *ibid.*, 241.

³³ Hohler 1980, 275–8; 278 identifies the lines preceding the *sator* formula with “Blessing of Alms offered on behalf of the living”. The prayer following the *sator* formula including the words “increase and multiply” resembles the prayer for the pain of childbirth in a tenth-century manuscript in Vienna, CVP, 1888, fol. 7, printed by Franz: “Oratio pro dolore partus. Deus, qui ab inicio fecisti hominem et dedisti ei adiutorem similem sibi, ut crescerent

petition for offspring depends on the command to “increase and multiply”—a command ultimately derived from the covenant with Noah in Genesis (9:1 “Crescite, et multiplicamini”); these words appear later in medical amulets to promote conception.³⁴ Thus the Corpus MS formula brings together a blessing extended by the invocation of the divine power of Christ the creator and the cross through the *sator* formula with a petition for successful conception and painless birth founded in the sanctification of procreation in the Old Testament.³⁵

The vernacular charms (the bee charm, the so-called journey charm, the Bethlehem motif in the theft charm) and Latin prayers in Corpus MS 41 demonstrate an easy accommodation between Old English incantatory practices for instrumental purposes and Christian prayers dedicated to specific needs. The success of this early accommodation may be one reason why healing charms flourished in the later Middle Ages. Some motifs known to Anglo-Saxons survive in Middle English manuscripts.³⁶ The previous cultural transformation of a pagan formula like the *sator* square into a Christian symbol for helping and healing illustrates how pre-Christian formulas (in Latin or the vernaculars) devolve meanings consonant with Christian thinking. Whether or not such practices were considered good religion or perverted religion (and therefore to be deemed superstitious) depended on the interpretations of observers outside the circumstances of their use.

Perhaps we are afforded a glimpse into the attitudes of the Anglo-Saxon who copied these charms and prayers into the margins of Corpus MS 41. I offer three observations about the inscriptions and their placement. First, the appearance of distinctive inks and careful

et multiplicarentur super terram, da misericordiam tuam huic famulae tuae ill., ut prospere et sine dolore parturiat.” According to Franz, such formulas in use during the tenth century were modified from marriage blessings (see Franz 1902, II, 190; cf. also Vogel and Reinhard 1963, 419).

³⁴ Gilbert the Englishman recommends a charm written and worn during sexual intercourse to promote conception, which requires the following words: “Dixit dominus *crescite*. + Uthiboth. + *et multiplicamini*. + Thabechay. + et replete terram + amath +” (emphasis mine). Gilbertus Anglicus, *Compendium medicine*, Lyons, 1510, fol. 287r, on which see Rider 2006, 163–4.

³⁵ Jolly 2007, 168.

³⁶ E.g. St. Peter for toothache, *sator* for childbirth, *Arcus supeð/r* for birth.

inscription of the texts with the exception of those copied on pages 206–208 (the charms for loss of cattle). Second, the placement of the prayer charm against fiends on page 272 (“wið ealra feo[n]da grimnessum”) seems to have preceded the inscription of the homiletic text that appears in the margins on the preceding and following pages, being fitted below the charm text on this page.³⁷ Third, these texts appear to be deliberately inserted in margins proximate to selected episodes in Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. For the sake of brevity, I list the correspondences below, with minimal comment.

1. Charm for settling bees (“wið ymbe”), left margin of page 182, Bede, *Old English History*, Book 3, Chapter 17: the good bishop Cedd chooses a place for his monastery high on the moors, a place seemingly more fit for robbers and a lair for beasts than suitable for monks. Cedd sanctified and tamed the place with prayers and fasting.³⁸
2. Charms for loss or theft of livestock begin on the last two marked but empty lines on page 206 in the Old English translation of the *Questions (Interrogationes)* of St. Augustine to Pope Gregory regarding how the church should manage specific practical issues in England.³⁹
3. Prayer charm against the cruelty of fiends (“wið ealra feo[n]da grimnessum”) on page 272, Bede, *Old English History*, in Book 4, Chapter 14: the miracle at the burial of the pious and infirm King Sebe of the East Saxons, who feared that he might die an unseemly death. After a vision and a peaceful death, the undersized stone coffin miraculously expanded to fit his corpse.⁴⁰

³⁷ The inks do not seem the same and the prayer charm is written in neater, more controlled, lines than the homily. Grant describes the homily in *Anglo-Saxon Manuscripts in Microfiche Facsimile ASMMF* 11.1, 19.

³⁸ Miller 1890–1898, II, 230, lines 16–19: “þa gefultmode se bischop þæs cyninges willan, 7 him stowe geceas mynster to getimbrigenne in heawum morum uppe in þæm wæs ma gesegen sceaðena deagolness 7 wildeora fernisse þonne, monna eardingstow.”

³⁹ The *Interrogationes* are inserted after Book III in the Old English translations of Bede’s *Historia ecclesiastica gentis anglorum*, see Miller 1890–1898, Introduction, xxiii.

⁴⁰ Miller 1890–1898, II, 296 and 297.

4. Three medicinal prayers for eyes, ears and a “great sickness” on page 326, Bede, *Old English History*, Book 4, Chapter 25: Caedmon spends his last night in the company of the aged and sick in the monastic infirmary.⁴¹

5. Childbearing prayer charm on page 329, *Old English History*, Bede, Book 4, Chapter 25: the Irish monk Adamnan is struck by horror at his sin and goes to a priest for advice about how to be saved; “he desired that he might be quickly released from the internal bonds of the sins, by which he was oppressed.”⁴²

6. Charm known as *The journey charm* begins on page 350, without a title, Bede, *Old English History*, Book 4, Chapter 30: Cuthbert was gradually persuaded to embark on his devout service as bishop; he protected his flock, incited them to heavenly things, and “what he taught in word, he first fulfilled in deed.”⁴³

Did the scribe who copied these texts into the Old English Bede know the text well enough to deliberately choose the points in Bede’s narrative at which to write these texts in the margins? If we ask how the charms and prayers fit with the episodes of Bede’s narrative, the evidence suggests that the answer is yes. The bee charm, which provides a way of taming wild bees, is placed in the margin at the story of how St. Cedd tamed the wilderness where he decided to build his monastery. In particular, the word *beasts* (“wildeor”) in the Old English translation on this page anticipates the animal subject matter of the bee charm. Moreover, the bee formula was a means of taming the wild to men’s

⁴¹ Both the dying and the sick were brought to this house. Miller 1890–1898, II, 346 and 347. These healing prayers begin beside the first line on the page at the line where Caedmon asks his companions in the monastic infirmary whether they have any Eucharist with them in that place; see Miller II, 348: “[Caedmon] frægn, hwæper heo ænig husl inne hæfdon.” CCC 41 adds “mid him”: “with them”.

⁴² The charm for childbearing begins without a title at the first line on the page, “[and Adamnus] feared that he should be severely punished for it [his sin] by the strict judge”: Miller 1890–1898, I, 350 and 351.

⁴³ Miller 1890–1898, I, 368 and 369. The Old English charm extends from CCC 41, 350 to 353, aligned very neatly in the outer margins with the lines of the main body of the text.

civilised purposes as did Cedd's prayers. In a sense, it parallels Cedd's actions with a contemporary practical instance.

Between the charms for loss or theft of livestock and the main text on the page there is no obvious link, except that this text in the Old English Bede belongs to the *Questions* that St. Augustine of Canterbury posed to Pope Gregory concerning how the church should manage certain matters relevant to the newly converted Anglo-Saxons. It is clear that the marginal scribe decided to take advantage of two unused lines coming at the end of the main text on page 206, probably because he realised that he would need extra space for the string of theft charms. The free lines occur in the Answer to Question VI regarding the consecration of a bishop. Preceding this in Question III, however, Augustine had asked about appropriate punishments for theft from a church, a subject to which the scribe might have related the livestock theft rituals. The general concerns about practical aspects of the church's policies and judgement, what actions or judgements the Pope recommended in specific situations, provide parameters for the theft charms, which combine practical action and Christian devotion and gesture. Next, the prayer charm against fiends expresses an anxiety and triumph of faith fitting the story of King Sebe: the charm text could function as a means of protection for the type of devout and troubled layman that Sebe is described as being. If demons caused Sebe's coffin to be too short, they were defeated miraculously. As in the case of the bee charm, this charm seems to supply a practical formula of words fitting for use within the circumstances described in the main text. The same principle applies to the placement of the three healing prayers in the face of specific illnesses.

The cures for sore eyes and ears and "great sickness" are just the sorts of texts that one might expect to be used in a monastic infirmary like the one described in Bede's narrative, where the poet Caedmon spent his last serene hours. In these short healing formulas the scribe presents us with rituals for in-house monastic healing. Fear and shame may link Adamnan's predicament and that of the woman facing conception and childbirth. One possible verbal connection is between Adamnan's desire for delivery from his sins and the woman's desire for safe delivery from the sign of her sin. The charm's opaque references to gifts can be understood in the light of Adamnan's story, wherein he offers gifts of fasting and prayers—religiously approved gifts by means

of which he is completely forgiven and sanctified. As to this last item, the charm beginning “I enclose myself with this staff and commit [myself] to God’s keeping” (“Ic me on þis gyred beluce and on godes helde bebeode”), the strong defensive stance and Lorica-like protective register of the charm suit someone negotiating spiritual threats rather than embarking on a literal journey.⁴⁴ This charm is placed on the margin of the story of Cuthbert’s call to be bishop—a placement that suggests that the person who wrote the charm felt that this protective formula related specifically to the needs of a bishop or someone in a spiritual office. Was he such a person? I will not speculate on that, although I would propose that the hand that wrote these texts in the margins of the Corpus Old English Bede knew the text well and deliberately chose where to write the charms and prayers in this manuscript. For the most part, he produced neat, carefully written texts of these short formulas. Sarah Larratt Keefer observed that the margins of the Corpus manuscript functioned as an archive.⁴⁵ To this I would add that in the case of the charms and prayers, each one has been deliberately filed or, better, consciously affiliated with a specific word, scene, dialogue, persona, or topos within Bede’s text.

CHARMS, PRAYERS, RECIPES AND *EXPERIMENTA*

While, as we have seen, Anglo-Saxon records of charms in religious contexts do not necessarily distinguish charms from other similar formulaic expressions, particularly Christian prayers, later lists of medical recipes often incorporate charms as verbal medical remedies. There too we find genres mixed, since verbal remedies may be expressed as

⁴⁴ R. S. Grant first called attention to links between these charms and the Irish Lorica tradition (Grant 1979). On this charm Jolly writes as follows: “While on the one hand the Celtic and Germanic journey motif suggests that the poem may very well have been used as a protective formula on a journey, on the other hand the spiritual meaning of life as a journey is implicit, such that the poem could have been used as protection and spiritual guidance in other ways on life’s journey,” in “The Margins”, 172. I think that its placement in relation to the Bede text tips the balance sharply towards the latter of these two possibilities insofar as the marginal scribe is concerned.

⁴⁵ Keefer 1996, 147–77.

prayers or as incantations or as mixed formulas. In addition, charms, curative rituals and amulets are not distinguished from non-verbal herbal recipes.⁴⁶ The term *charm* is, nevertheless, an apt term for verbal cures with regard to English remedy books, because the medieval compilers typically titled a verbal cure *carmen* or *charm/e*. The term was intended to indicate that the remedy operated mainly through words, written or spoken.⁴⁷ These remedies are commonly embedded within lists of medical recipes. Nevertheless, charms are relatively scarce within vernacular medical recipe collections. Typically, a small number of charms are scattered among Middle English remedies that rely primarily on plants. In a set of late Middle English collections of medical recipes (*receptaria*), no more than 25 charms occur in a collection of vernacular recipes for medical purposes running to 233 items. This is less than 10 percent of the remedies.⁴⁸

Another genre in which one finds charms embedded is *experimenta*: that is, specified operations intended to achieve predicted results as proven by past experience. In Tokyo, Takamiya MS 61, written in the mid-fifteenth century,⁴⁹ entries appear in three languages—Middle English, Latin and French. It is a much-used notebook that consists of 82 leaves (about 164 pages). Besides containing a text of the *Secrets of Philosophy*, the book includes medical remedies, lunaria and a few charms. There are two Longinus charms for staunching blood⁵⁰ and

⁴⁶ On medical recipes and overlapping genres in Middle English texts, see I. Taavitsainen 2001, 85–113, especially 86 and 90–98.

⁴⁷ Frequently the interests of the modern investigator determine whether such a verbal formula is read as a charm, a prayer, a medical recipe, or a written amulet, whatever its title in the manuscript.

⁴⁸ Olsan 2008, 214–37, at 214, 216–7 and 226.

⁴⁹ I am deeply grateful to T. Takamiya for graciously allowing the study of this manuscript and for permitting the use of images of it for the preparation of this essay. For a description of the manuscript, see Jones and Olsan 2010.

⁵⁰ The Longinus charms are as follows: fol. 29r “... ffor stanchyng of blode. longius miles lancea latus christi perforauit & continuo exiuit sanguis & aqua in redempcionem nostram adiuro te sanguis per iesum christum & per latus eius & per sanguinem. sta sta sta. christus & homines Johannes descendunt in flumen Jordanis aqua obstupuit & stetit sic faciat sanguis istius hominis N .p. In nomine Iesu christe & sancti Johannis Baptiste amen”.

prayers to be said over medicinal herbs.⁵¹ Several magical experiments (*experimenta*) include verbal formulas that play an essential but by no means central role in the elaborate rituals.

The magical *experimenta* in MS 61 include a procedure to induce invisibility. In this case, invisibility requires inhumation of a dead puppy with beans and taking a bean in one's mouth (fol. 70v). Another *experimentum*, to obtain the favour of one's lord, employs the herb millefolium, and saying the *pater noster* and *Credo* for nine days beginning with the ninth day of the moon (fol. 72r). A third, to unmask a thief, features a candle inscribed with holy names through which spirits are summoned "who will truly answer everything they are asked" (fol. 75r). Three *experimenta* concern women—one for divination of the sex of a child, one for determination of whether a woman is pregnant, and one to bring down a woman's milk, which contains no verbal components (75r). An *experimentum* to eradicate rats and mice requires three strategically placed stones inscribed with holy names (fol. 75r). In all these procedures, the spoken formulas become less important than the ritually performed acts. Words, names and prayers function as essential signs to introduce cosmic or divine powers; however, their recitation or written representation is integrated into extended ritual procedures from which they could hardly be extracted. In addition, the rituals are definitively private or deliberately secret and take place outside the auspices of the church and its public liturgy although they freely employ Christian prayers and holy names.

For example, an *experimentum* recorded in French (on fol. 75v) enables the charmer—who must choose the propitious moment of a full moon and peaceful (*devout*) weather—to gather the animals of the forest into his presence by means of the favour of St. Giles, a Biblical canticle (Daniel 3:56–58) and what the text designates as a "charme". This charm in fact takes the form of a prayer asking for the miracle of bringing the animals into the presence of the charmer. The *experimentum* begins thus:

⁵¹ Fol. 29v "ffor the fevere" and on fol. 42r a Latin prayer beginning, "Deus propicius esto peccatori".

To assemble the beasts in the forest. When you go to the forest at a full moon and when the weather is peaceable, holy and clear, provide yourself with a good and helpful companion. And beginning, to the honour of God and Saint Giles, say the Psalm, "Blessed be all works in the Lord"⁵² and then say this charm:

"True God Almighty, you who did miracles in your childhood, through you (I) command the stags and bucks within the range of this place, in the mountains and in the plains, that they may gather to me, also, all the beasts according to their kind and be here at hand, at my hunting stand, if you please. And may all of them come to rest until their moisture [be] parted from them to refresh my poor life. And then they may return to their haunts, as will please you, Jesu, the more. And by the virtue of my Psalm may you save all in body and soul."⁵³

Directions follow to bring the animals to the charmer's presence drawn by their own natural smells, which this enchanter and hunter has elaborately prepared and buried in a clay pot.⁵⁴ "They will assemble on account of the sweet smell of nature to the one who hunts them, and they come so close to you that you will be able to put your foot to their neck and do with them as you like, in full and open view."⁵⁵ Thus the

⁵² I omit the repeated "domino" in the translation.

⁵³ Tokyo, Takamiya MS 61, fol. 75v. "Pur assemble lez bestes en forest. Quant tu vas a for't a pleine lune & quant le temps soit peisible deuout & cler purvey te de bon company loial & hande & en comesaunt al honour de dieux & de seint Giles dites le psalme de Benedicite omnia opera dno dno & puis dites cest charme: 'Verray dieux tout puissant que fais miracles en ta enfante . per te coniuere lez cerfs & deyms dedens cest place en monts & en playns que a moy assembleret ou toutes lez bestes de lour nature & soient prestes cy a mon trist. si le vous pleist. et tous y metez en arestes tanque euay de eux partie a refressher ma pouere vie & puis repeiront a lour hauntz come a vous plerra ihu de tant & per la vertu de mon psalme vous sauvez touz en corps & alme'."

⁵⁴ The text continues on to fol. 76r, where words are lost at the end of the lines due to medieval damage to the manuscript. I am grateful to William Burgwinkle for his help with the translation of this fragmented text. Whatever errors of translation or interpretation remain are mine.

⁵⁵ "ils ensenbleront pur savour de nature a lour vener et tan pres vous fendront que vous mettront lez pies a coll. & puis facetzde ceo apert a vue." Takamiya MS 61, fol. 76r.

hunter may play the role of St. Giles, who was befriended by a deer that he protected from hunters.⁵⁶

The occult *experimenta* in Takamiya 61 employ the language and practices of mainstream Christianity to satisfy local purposes or interests, not the least of which is to endow the charmer with a special status. Holy names, psalmody, the familiar *pater noster* and creed, recited in Latin, invoke divine power through their Latinity and liturgical significance. These kinds of *experimenta* employ orthodox religious beliefs and practices, which were centred in worship at church, and draw from that public centre elements that are put to use for private and personal purposes.⁵⁷ To acquire a superior's favour, to catch a thief, to know whether a child will be male or female or whether a woman will bear a child, to ensure the nurturing of a child, and to keep out the rats, involve practical concerns that enhance the status and property of the interested parties, as magic often works to do. A few ingredients are exotic, like the precious stones "from Crete", or are exceptionally valuable, like gold and silver. The ritual to assemble the beasts balances magical actions with the practical purpose of bringing the game to the hunter. The summoner of beasts takes a helper when he goes into the forest to perform the ritual; it remains unclear whether the charmer is acting on his own behalf or on the commission of a patron. Is this a ritual to gather the game for hunters or is the charmer a hunter only metaphorically? The significant point for this paper is that in *experimenta* the performance of actions takes priority over spoken words. Charms may play a part; yet it is the completed procedure that effects the desired results.

⁵⁶ The legend of St. Giles originated in France and existed in an Anglo-Norman poetic *Vie de Saint Gilles* in the twelfth century. A Latin *vita*, dating to the end of the eleventh century, and an Anglo-Saxon rendition, dating to the twelfth century, witness to the early popularity of the legend in England. See Treharne 1997.

⁵⁷ The religious elements of magical *experimenta* can be considered marginal to the central practices of official worship. I do not pursue this sense of marginality in order to maintain the focus here on charms as a genre that mingles both prayers and *experimenta*.

Orality

In this section, I want to stress just one point: a much greater proportion of medieval charms were performed in the oral-aural environment of person-to-person contact than we find documented in writing. The written evidence of charms (which is all the evidence that we have of them for the Middle Ages) represents a fragment of the number of charms that circulated by word of mouth. One reason for this is that most charms satisfy personal and domestic, rather than communal, interests and needs, and the evidence of directions for their use suggests that medieval people employed charms in private situations.⁵⁸ Healing charms provide self-help to people with minor pains, chronic ailments or recurring attacks, and fresh wounds or old sores. The bed-ridden sick, pregnant women and peasants tending livestock benefitted from the use of charms. Charms were employed by herb gatherers and by healers of various kinds—from learned physicians and surgeons to local leeches, wise women, midwives, laymen and clerics. As a whole the demographic of charm users included many who did not read or write or who possessed limited abilities to do so.⁵⁹ Status accrued to those who “knew” charms and could perform them when needed or supply them by word of mouth. Finally, it is unlikely that all the charms that were in circulation by word of mouth were written down. Rather, written copies survive only of those that were widely distributed (such as the *Three good brothers*), those that came to the attention of interested people who could and did copy them into books, or again those that circulated within specialised circles that authorised their use for practical or magical purposes.

⁵⁸ Paradoxically, when private needs are perceived as generally being of interest to the community, then official religion often provides prayers for specific purposes, resulting in an overlap of incantatory formulas and prayers for similar purposes.

⁵⁹ C. Watkins, in his proposal for reformulating the model for study of medieval religious cultural practices along the lines of an *official* and *unofficial* (rather than *elite* and *folk*) demarcation, calls attention to the problem of scanty evidence: “the communities of medieval Europe have, because their cultures tended to be articulated by oral rather than written forms, left only the very faintest traces of beliefs and practices.” See Watkins 2004, 140–51.

Charms recorded in remedy books often function as prescriptions, which were to be recited in a patient's presence and often also copied out for individual application to a patient, either as an amulet or on some medium to be ingested such as an apple or communion wafer. Don Skemer calls attention to the fact that charms written within remedy books to be used as amulets would have been copied out of those same books, which served as exemplars. There would have been in circulation multiple copies that had been made for individual performance or application. Inevitably, copies that were carried or attached to the body have been lost in the natural course of their use.

Censorship

In the late medieval and early modern period, particularly the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, charms came under suspicion and censorship. Various social forces motivated the extirpation of charms from manuscripts. In England in the fourteenth century, Wycliffites and other reformers manifested a growing distaste for religious acts that suggested to them that ritual words were being used to affect material objects, disease, or the spiritual status of people. Early in the fifteenth century, calls to cleanse religion of superstitious beliefs were being aired on the continent. In Heidelberg, an Augustinian lector in theology was accused of holding superstitious beliefs. "The most offensive of these were ritual blessings or benedictions such as the use of the names of three magi in formulas or verses as a cure for wounds and diseases, or the use of some lines and phrases from the opening passages of St. John's Gospel as a means of driving out the Devil."⁶⁰ Britta-Juliane Kruse calls attention to two remedies for women in which a censor strikes out names and letters in two charm formu-

⁶⁰ The accusation was made on February 11, 1405, against Werner von Freeburg. See Veenstra 1998 151. Charms and spells were also part of the world of necromancy. M. D. Bailey writes as follows: "In fact, in some ways they [spells and charms] represented the meeting point between these two worlds [necromantic and religious], where intensity of religious devotion balanced on the tenuous line between extreme but allowable practice and illicit superstition" (Bailey 2003, 132).

las.⁶¹ Eventually, the use of such charms might draw accusations of witchcraft, although this effect was less pronounced in England than elsewhere.⁶²

The motivation for censorship within the remedy-book manuscripts described below is most likely aligned to the religious developments unique to England. After King Henry VIII declared the English church independent of the Pope and began to dissolve the monasteries in 1536, English worshippers suppressed certain traditional Roman Catholic practices to various degrees.⁶³ The status and proliferation of charms, along with prayers for special needs and the intercession of saints, practices long fostered by the medieval church, came to be rejected by Protestant reformers.

Although it is difficult to discern the precise motivations for the censorship of charms in individual manuscripts, we can observe the effects and infer some local reasons from the appearance of the censors' marks.⁶⁴ I offer examples from three English manuscripts containing essentially the same materials and all written during the fifteenth century;⁶⁵ therefore, we need not be concerned with debates and movements that viewed charms as superstitious or potentially heretical before 1400. If the censorship of charms in these manuscripts results from the pressures of sixteenth-century English Protestant rejection of traditional medieval religious practices as superstitious and idolatrous, what becomes apparent in these examples is a range of intensity with which charms were censored or marked as rejected. The different methods of rejection suggest that the individual readers held discernibly different attitudes towards the materials that they cen-

⁶¹ Kruse 1999, 57–9, with an illustration on 58.

⁶² See Bailey 2003, 188, footnote 33.

⁶³ For examples of erasures, removal, and cancellation of offensive prayers and images in printed prayer books after 1534, see Duffy 2006, 147–70 and especially illustrations on 153, 154, 161, 165, 168 and 169.

⁶⁴ I do not pursue the details of manuscript ownership here, in the interest of describing exactly how charms are censored within the texts.

⁶⁵ These manuscripts belong to a group closely related to the remedy book in British Library, Additional MS 33996, edited by Heinrich 1896. The distribution of the charms among the manuscripts is described in Olsan, 2008, 225–30.

sored—attitudes or anxieties that produced specific results intended for other readers of the manuscripts.

British Library MS Sloane 374 contains about twenty-four charms. All of them are heavily crossed out. Fortunately, it is possible to identify most of the charms by deciphering a few words under the concealing ink. Most of the headings are left unmarred, except where select words have been obscured. The censor's intention is that subsequent readers not be able to use or even to see the words in any charm, although evidently they are meant to know that these are charm texts, because that is clearly indicated in the headings. The censor, thus, has advertised his expurgation of illicit verbal remedies.

In one case, he salvages a remedy by removing its verbal formula and leaving the rest. The charm for hawe in the eye has its title reduced from "Her ys a charme for the hawe in a manys eye" by crossing out "Her ys a charme", so that it reads simply "for the hawe in the eye". The next thirteen lines, which contain the conjuration of the *hawwe* with liturgical phrases, are thoroughly obscured by multiple strike-outs drawn through each line of writing so that the next readable line begins "take fair white ginger and pare it". These words, which had originally belonged to the directions accompanying application of the verbal charm, now stand alone as a useable medical remedy. This censor may have started his project with the intention of carefully expurgating the charm texts by targeting offending verbal formulas, for the *hawwe charm* is one of the first charms one encounters among the recipes. But his procedure was evidently to use the headings that begin with "A Charm for..." as the cue to finding objectionable texts. Usually he leaves these untouched as a sign of his work, and then obliterates the following charm text. In one instance, he thoroughly marks out seven lines of the text under "Here is a charm for the toth ache" (fol. 42r), but then fails to note or remove the four lines of the charm that continue on the verso of the leaf.

In our second example, Oxford, Bodleian, Ashmole MS 1477 (Part II), at first charm texts are struck out in black ink by one straight line overwritten and two interlocking wavy lines. On one folio (fol. 12v), both a Latin *Longinus* charm and an English *Flum Jordan* charm are marked in this way. Elsewhere charms have been only superficially designated for rejection by an apparently hastily written "X" (e.g., fol. 19v). In these two methods, we see the responses of two different

censors. Neither of these two modes of censorship is intended to obliterate words completely or to make the charms entirely unreadable, although the first one is more deliberate and thorough, and the effort to read the texts under the censor's marks is impeded. Yet a good deal less anxiety about the words themselves being visible is expressed here than in our first example. The marks in the manuscript merely communicate that the charms are rejected, either seriously in the case of the wavy-line censor or casually in the case of one who put an "X" on the page and moved on.⁶⁶ In either case, if the owner of this manuscript were to lend it or pass it on, the fact of the disclaimers would be obvious. He would not have to fear accusations that he had indulged in the use of illicit materials.⁶⁷

In the third example, British Library, Lansdowne 680, a pocket-sized Middle English recipe collection, there is no systematic censorship of charms, since only three of its eleven charms suffer damage. In these three instances, Latin words specifically are targeted. The censor expunges (by rubbing them out) enough words to destroy the sense of a charm for bleeding.⁶⁸ This strategy of erasing enough words to make the Latin unreadable fails in another charm for staunching blood, because the eradicator forgot to check the back of the leaf, where the last six lines of the charm appear undamaged. The erasures in a wafer charm for fevers (fol. 66v) are so careful that a useable formula containing no Latin words remains. The crosses that had been placed between the Latin words are preserved, so wafers will be marked only with crosses, not words. The suspect Latin has been removed by

⁶⁶ Part II of Ashmole, consists of 47 folios. The Leechcraft text ends on fol. 28^v. Charms are crossed out in the same manner elsewhere on fol. 33^v, 39^v and 44r (2).

⁶⁷ Lighter kinds of cancellation might result from "Protestant reformers'" disapproval of texts viewed as "blasphemous prayers", as many were in the books of hours. "The prayers themselves, such primer staples as the 'Obsecro te', the 'Fifteen Oes', the prayer of St. Bernard, and many others, 'of truthe ben of no more alliaunce, consanguinitie, and kynred vnto true prayer, than was Symon Magus, that false man, vnto Symon Peter, that good man, and true seuauant of Iesu Christ'." This statement is from William Marshal's "Admonition to the Reader" in his 1535 *Goodly Prymer*. See Erler 1999, 504–5.

⁶⁸ That is "for the bloody flux": fol. 48^v

someone willing to preserve the rubricated crosses and promulgate the use of the ritual in English even to the extent of administering communion wafers.

The techniques of censorship in these three manuscripts vary from complete obliteration to formal crossings out, to hasty indications that the page has something objectionable on it, to an unsystematic pursuit and laborious erasure of Latin words. As I have said, the significant fact is that the presence of charms alone raises owners' anxieties and induces them to delete, expunge, or mark as rejected the texts. No other items in these manuscripts are cancelled.

Conclusion

An account of charms in the context of medieval culture does not yield a simple or linear narrative. The story is conditioned by what we can learn from the manuscripts in which charms are found. In the eleventh-century Anglo-Saxon manuscript, we saw not simply the introduction of markedly pagan Germanic incantations into a monastic text, but the integration of the *sator* formula into the form of a Christian benedictional prayer. The *sator* formula seems to have been accommodated to Christian contexts long before it appears in the Anglo-Saxon prayer for childbirth. This Anglo-Saxon prayer exemplifies the alliance of verbal incantations with religious prayers early in the Middle Ages. On the other hand, the location of the charms in the Corpus Manuscript and the Middle English manuscript of Gilbert the Englishman point to the marginal sites where charms are often recorded. The reasons for such locations vary. The Corpus charms seem to have been added as a means of preserving them for future reference. Some are more casually written at the edge or on a fly-leaf of a codex. A sickness charm may be added as a supplement to material to which it is related, as is evidently the case with Gilbert's charm. But there is a theoretical marginality that is also relevant to Gilbert's mania charm. Whether or not to recommend charms could be a delicate issue for some Scholastics.

In a wider perspective, the charms embedded in vernacular medical remedy books illustrate how charms circulated in manuscripts—charms that were subordinate to, but mingled into, curative recipes. In the

Takamiya miscellany, charms play a part in ritual and magical *experimenta* intended to manipulate the natural world. Charms lose their verbal fulsomeness, which gives way to ritual acts, while retaining their medieval Christian language. Finally, the mutilation of charm texts came about in the sixteenth century due to political and ideological forces. So whereas pious clergy like the scribes of the Cambridge Corpus manuscript introduced charms into the margins of that English manuscript, pious or fanatical religious reformers (whether Protestant or Catholic) were responsible for expunging them from the very manuscripts into which they had been copied a mere century previously.

During the intervening five centuries, charms flourished in manuscripts—repeatedly springing up among recipes, prayers and *experimenta*, often taking on the forms of the proximate species. The written records present images of performance that, like unused prescriptions, were not realised in life. Yet, when the reason for writing a charm down was expressly to preserve it as an aid to memory or for future use by someone else, we rightly imagine that charms written in books were performed, both before and after they appeared in written form. In this sense, the traces of charms that appear in medieval manuscripts, although possessing an admirable longevity and authority from our perspective, were in their own time marginal to the circulation of charms in the oral culture.

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CHAPTER VII

Church Benedictions and Popular Charms in Hungary

Éva Pócs

In this paper I am going to examine the Hungarian aspects of the connections between *benedictions* and *charms*. In Hungary, just as in the whole of Europe, *charms* as a form of verbal magic were once present in the practice of all social strata. In the latter centuries, however, they lived on mainly among the peasantry. In the early twentieth century the use of charms was still prevalent in practically all spheres of private life. Most of the surviving texts were healing charms, but in fact almost all the activities of village life that were related to meeting everyday needs, such as ploughing, milk-churning, averting hailstorms or getting rid of worms, entailed the use of charms. These were either applied independently or accompanied the activity in question, in order to ensure its success. In medieval Europe the function of charms was fulfilled also by the official clerical benediction and exorcism rites of the church. This ecclesiastical practice played a role identical with that of lay, popular magic; both were active in the same spheres of private and public lives: that is, rendering assistance in the crisis situations of human life. From the church's point of view, benedictions played their role very much on the periphery of life when compared to the sacraments, which represented the focus of religious life.¹ For the individual, however, benedictions had great significance, since they could always be resorted to as a form of private service at times of emergency (Franz 1909, I, 14; II, 418–9; Grube-Verhoeven

¹ The sacraments serve the purpose of benediction or exorcism depending on whether they plead for God's blessing or serve to break the power of the evil spirit (Bálint 1943, 102).

1966, 17).² Such instances were the healing of people who were sick or suffered from maladies attributed to possession by the Devil, as well as blessing people at the turning points of life, blessing the house, the ploughland and the animals, rendering household tools and utensils more effective, purifying them of evil, or chasing away bad weather or parasites.

The *benedictions* were performed by priests according to a routine fixed in the liturgy, but, when need arose, laypeople could also practise them, once they had learnt the publicly performed rituals and copied them using the textual elements in their entirety or in fragments (Franz 1909, I, 4–15 and 32–9). There was constant interaction with popular magic during the whole period of the Middle Ages. The only difference is that those magical rituals that lived on in the hands of the priests were tolerated by the church. At times the rites of the church replaced the popular activities, while at other times they were carried out in parallel with the popular methods of healers and magicians. In this paper I shall analyse a few instances of such connections. I present examples of the way in which rural inheritors of benedictions incorporated textual elements and gestures known from clerical practice in their own wealth of magical tradition, and show how they “Christianise” the lay practice of charms. I shall talk about the practice of village healers by which they emulate the textual elements and gestures known from the exorcism performed by priests, and eventually I shall discuss the related roles played by the medieval priesthood and rural weather magicians and the interconnections between these roles.

Many groups of Hungarian charms known from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries find their origins in benedictions. Some of them are partial, fragmented “copies” of priests’ benedictions, while others are borrowings of rites with a similar function (used by healers and weather magicians). Connections were not unilateral. It is true for the whole of Europe that officially compiled rituals did not appear until the fifteenth century.³ These always adapted readily to the require-

² For a Hungarian summary of the question, see Bálint 1943, 119–24. For an exhaustive European summary, see Franz 1909, I–II.

³ Franz 1909, II, 642–43: “Mit diesen offiziellen liturgischen Büchern... erhielt der Klerus eine Norm für seine amtliche Tätigkeit... Alle jene illegitimen Benediktionsformeln, wie sie in Klöstern und Pfarreien oft gebraucht wurden, waren von der Aufnahme ausgeschlossen...”

ments of the locality in question, both in form and in content. This was true until the publication of the *Rituale romanum* in 1614, which brought uniformity to ritual practice (Franz 1909, II, 648). Although according to the church the *sacraments* carry spiritual rather than physical power and the *sacramentalia* exert their beneficent impact not directly but “through God” (Franz 1909, I, 27–32), benedictions managed to incorporate a varied array of elements of lay magic and textual motifs of popular spells and bring them slightly more into tune with Christianity. As we can see from Adolph Franz’s collection, even the early medieval material is rich in unofficial charms that come from a wide-ranging popular practice or were at least influenced by that practice. These unofficial blessings in a way supplemented the shortcomings of the official practice. If, for instance, there was no officially prescribed or permitted formula of benediction for a particular illness, they could resort to the semi-official one from local popular practice. These semi-official benedictions are in an intermediate position between popular charm and official church benediction.

The fight against superstition had been growing more powerful ever since the fifteenth century. Naturally, after the Reformation, the practice of benediction quickly disappeared in Protestant areas, but even within the Catholic church it waned rapidly until it vanished entirely in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Franz 1909, II, 615–41). Purifying the texts of benedictions was a part of the anti-magic campaign of the church on all fronts, being one form of protest against methods and practices declared to be superstitious. These included chasing away evil by the ringing of bells, by blowing, or through the amulet-like use of sacred objects where “words act by themselves” or “the human formula compels divine grace”. *Sacramentalia* gained a symbolic explanation, and belief in their direct, almost physical effect disappeared (Franz 1909, II, 641–4; Thomas 1971, 57–75). By denying the “direct” impact of objects, gestures and texts, the church and the priesthood also lost some of their connection with magically influenced objects, such as the scenes of the everyday life of the peasantry, its practical objects and the people themselves. A good example is the long and constantly revived debate surrounding the Holy Sacrament and church processions: for the fields to be blessed, is it necessary to carry the Sacrament during the procession—and are processions necessary at all (Franz 1909, II, 111; Thomas 1971, 62)?

Church reforms to do with benediction, the simplifications affecting local ritual and the encoding of official ritual from the fifteenth century onwards generally meant purifying these of “pagan” elements and reducing or cutting their connection with lay magic (Franz 1909, II, 105–23). The very fact of printing out local rituals caused a degree of rigidity and detachment from local tradition, but the appearance of the *Rituale romanum*, which centralised practice, had a particularly strong influence in this direction. It excluded bottom-up initiatives, alignment with local norms and lay practice, and narrowed down the chances of meeting specific needs (Franz 1909, II, 642–9). Texts that were not in line with the new norms were excluded, and their use was banned. The number of occasions for benediction was also reduced (for example, even before the appearance of the *Rituale romanum* there were rituals that contained no benediction which were to be used when threatened by a hailstorm).

Monasteries played a great part throughout the Middle Ages in sustaining and expanding the textual range of exorcisms. As Franz indicates, there was a particularly high number of new forms derived from the monasteries, particularly in the eighth century. Several textual types that later came to be known as charms used by village healers were proven to have originated in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Thus, for example, the formula used for stopping bleeding “*Sta sanguis in te...*” appeared in the fifteenth century as the work of a “learned monk” (Pradel 1907, 388), and this is also the time when the *Longinus-Segen* became widespread in the whole of Central, Western and Northern Europe (Ohrt 1938, 471–3) and so on. In Hungary, where Latin literacy appeared in the eleventh century, these medieval connections and processes cannot be captured in textual relics, even though “trickle down” and “spread upwards” effects were probably continuous throughout the centuries of the Middle Ages. We can see from our textual relics that the process of texts becoming popularised from official clerical practice accelerated in the early modern period. A precondition for such transitions was the translation of Latin texts into the vernacular languages that were probably still in use within the semi-official clerical framework, in the monasteries. We must also emphasise the mediating role of monasteries and monks in the dissemination of semi-official texts (Ebermann 1903, 135). We have less of an overview of processes that took place in the territory of the Eastern church. At any rate, Mansikka reports a similar Orthodox practice

from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Mansikka 1909, 110–17): books of magic and divination banned by the church were disseminated by friars and monks in monasteries. In Southeastern and Eastern Europe the monastic practice persisted much longer than it did in Central and Western Europe. We even have twentieth-century data about clerical persons performing healing and charms.⁴

In Hungary, semi-official clerical texts arising from monastic practice have been known since the sixteenth century. The Latin, Hungarian or bilingual texts contained in our codices also reflect this semi-official condition. In other words, they show that benedictions and church blessings represented a transitional stage halfway to charms. One example is the *Prayer against being shot with an arrow*, from 1526 (*Peer-kódex*, 88–92). The healing text known as *Contra febres* from the Peer Codex was an amulet text used all over the greater part of Europe, which also became a frequent motif of charms:

criftus orzagol +
 criftus paranchol +
 criftus goz +
 ...
 [Christ rules +
 Christ reigns +
 Christ triumphs +
 ...

Directly next to the text in the Codex we find the Latin original for the translation:

Christus vincit,
 Christus regnat,
 Christus imperat
 ... (*Peer-kódex*, 88.)

This formula (originally a medieval liturgical acclamation) was also a frequent element of official benedictions; thus, for example, Franz

⁴ E.g. Krauss 1890, 46; Pradel 1907; or see Vajkai's book, which quotes examples of Transylvanian Hungarians requiring the charms from Romanian priests, 1943, 25–6.

published it as a storm-averting benediction (Franz 1909, II, 96). Specific connections to the church may be pointed out also in the case of the series of charms associated with treasure-hunting using a magical dowsing rod. Variants of this text noted down in the sixteenth century are known as *Gyöngyösi ráolvasások* (Gyöngyösi charms). Characteristically, they survived on the pages of a Bible preserved in a Franciscan library (Döbrentei 1840, 45–6). Their first known record comes from a German-speaking area from a tenth-century semi-official clerical manuscript in Latin. These texts appeared in printed books of magic in the sixteenth century and then spread in a chapbook format translated into the vernacular languages. German language variants were used in Hungary to look for ore in mining towns (Eis 1964). The following is an extract from a Hungarian manuscript from the early nineteenth century (which still bears the mark of its origin as a benediction):

I adjure you dowsing rods
 by the living God, the true God and the holy God,
 and by him who had created heaven and earth from nothing
 and created us by a single word,
 I adjure you by the Day of Judgement
 not to point at copper or tin or iron or any other stupidity,
 only at gold, silver and precious stones
 and all good things...
 ...
 Oh you dowsing rods that stand still,
 move on and stop over the hidden treasure,
 I adjure you, upon the crown of thorns
 that was nailed over the head of our Lord Jesus,
 that you show the hidden treasure,
 in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, amen...⁵

⁵ “Kényszerítlek én titeket tű vesszők
 az élő Istenre, az igaz Istenre és a szent Istenre,
 és arra, aki mennyet és földet teremtette a semmiből,
 és minket is egy szóval teremtett,
 és kényszerítlek az ítéletnek napjára is,
 hogy ti se rézre, se ónra, se vásra, se bolondságra,
 hanem csak aranyra, ezüstre és drágakövekre mutassatok

Recipe books held by laypeople in sixteenth- to eighteenth-century Hungary were mainly used and preserved by aristocrats, in other words the nobility. Besides a fair quantity of healing recipes and household advice, they contained plenty of benediction texts.⁶ This body of charms shares traits with the clerical corpus in a stage of transition. Its very existence proves that charms were still a more or less universal genre used by the entire population, but the clerical heritage was *already* used in different ways by different strata.

In the texts from the early modern period we can only capture a few points in this trickle-down process. If we wish to qualify the rich wealth of popular charms collected in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and to point out a few of their characteristics, we have nothing more to rely on than a small number of surviving fragments of clerical literacy, a few books of magic and aristocratic recipe books, as well as the European benedictions material published by Franz.

In this regard it is particularly instructive to analyse the popular charms collected from the oral tradition in terms of form and content. We can see how rural inheritors of the benedictions incorporate into their own magical tradition the textual elements and gestures that they had come to know from their priests. It is also interesting how they make the lay practice of charms more “Christian”. (To be sure, these processes may have also taken place far earlier within the clerical practice of benedictions.) We can often trace the way in which magical texts and motifs became incorporated into religious structures (or the religious textual elements into magical structures). There is a whole line of stereotypical grammatical structures of charms that may have

és minden jóra mozduljatok.

Oh ti vesszők, vesszők, mik állatok
mozduljatok, és állatok az elrejtett kincsen,
kényszerítlek titeket a tövises koszorúra,
mely a mi urunk Jézus Krisztusnak fejére szegezteték,
hogy megmutassátok az elrejtett kincset,
az Atyának, Fiúnak és Szentlélek Istennek nevében, ámen”
(Wieder 1890, 247–52. See also Nagy 1957).

⁶ See, for example, the texts published by Béla Radvánszky in 1897 and Gyula Magyary-Kossa between 1929 and 1940, or József Jankovics’s selection from the rich material retained in the archives of the Radvánszky family: Radvánszky 1879; Magyary-Kossa 1929, 1931 and 1940; Jankovics 1985 and 1990.

purely magical or purely religious contents. Common structures of this kind are, for example, commands, similes and impossibility formulas, which can be formulated according to Kaarle Krohn's categories as *just as... so...*, and *if..., then...* (Krohn 1901), as well as so-called Slavic antitheses: *I shall not do this but that* types and "infinite" magical enumerations. Of these structures we highlight a few that have both "magical" and "religious" versions and thus enable us to explore certain connections between the written tradition of the church and the lay practice of oral transmission. It is in a similar context that we speak about the "amulet-like" use of religious texts, which is essentially a magical use. Our examples also reveal certain aspects of giving a "religious" aspect to magical texts or of adapting texts that have their origin in the written Christian tradition to the local lay practice.

Magical and Religious Commands

The simplest and also most general structure of charms is a command: the magician or healer (let us call him/her A) gives a command to the person, object, illness or demon (call it B) that they wish to influence by magic, through the magical power of the word. The magical influence on B can be represented like this: $A \rightarrow B$). For example, "Sty, go away!", Hungarian healers would recite in the past, making harvesting gestures over the sty (in Hungarian and Russian "barley") that had grown over the eye.

The most important distinctive sign of religious commands as opposed to purely magical texts, was some form of reference to the higher being (to be called C). (This way the magical influence is fulfilled through involving C: $A \rightarrow C \rightarrow B$). This command given to B with reference to C is the par excellence structure for curses (and blessings).⁷ Aspect C, the reference to the higher being, is usually extended by various attributes of the sacred person. References to the attributes of Jesus, the Virgin Mary or the saints, or to certain events of their lives, are common tools of enlisting textual magic in the service of religion. They can serve as extra elements of any magical text aimed at averting demons

⁷ In exorcisms: "dieser Dämon wird unter Scheltworte im Namen Christi aufgefordert, dem Besessenen zu verlassen" (Franz, 1909, II, 581).

or illnesses, as they enhance the effectiveness of the magical command. These were common components of official benediction and exorcism texts and charms averting illness. Their common element all over Europe is a reference to various attributes of gods and saints incorporated in the enumeration of magical commands. The following is an extract from an eleventh-century benediction used to disperse storm clouds:

I conjure you, demon and Satan,
I conjure you by him,
who had placed his right hand on the cross,
I conjure you through the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost,
through the Angel Michael...⁸

In Hungarian charms, in this textual position the most common elements are various moments and objective attributes of the Passion narrative: the power, commandments and words of the Father, the Lord or Our Lady; Jesus's arrest, sacrifice, blood, death, crown of thorns and so on, as well as the power and strength of Christ or the Holy Spirit, and the virginity, childbirth, baby or milk of the Virgin Mary. The following is a text against heartache from 1735 from the repertoire of a female village healer in Debrecen:

... I bind by the living God,
his holy strength,
his holy power,
his holy gold ring on his finger,
may he seal and lock away this wicked nightmare...⁹

⁸ "Coniuro te, demon et satanas,
per illum te coniuro,
qui dexteram suam in cruce posuit,
per patrem et filium et spiritum sanctum te coniuro;
per angelum Michaelem..."
(fifteenth-century copy; Franz 1909, II, 80–81).

⁹ "... kötöm az élő Istennek
szent erejének,
szent hatalmának,
szent ujjabeli arany gyűrűjének [miatta],
pecsételje el ezt a gonosz lidércet..." (Komáromy 1910, 483–4).

Or a Hungarian charm against *scurvy* (skin disease with scabs, skin cancer):

Pumpkin scurvy,
 poppy scurvy,
 cataract scurvy,
 seventy-seven kinds of scurvy,
 I baptise thee with his sacred blood,
 with his death,
 with the sound of the heavenly bells
 with the virginity of holy virgin Lady Margaret
 with the golden ring of St. John the Baptist.¹⁰

The tradition of these magical/religious commands is incredibly rich, I believe, within the wealth of European charms. The syncretistic character of charms is also highlighted by the magical emphasis placed in the service of religion. Texts of this kind often have the opening or closing formula “not by my own strength but the strength of the Holy Spirit the Lord”, or, as in a Ruthenian charm, “It wasn’t me calling, it was the saint... who called” (Kupczanko 1891, 62).

Magical and Religious Enumerations

Enumerating the attributes of the saints in structures of repetitive parallelisms of ideas demonstrates the use of repetition or endless enumeration as magical structures here placed in the service of religion.

¹⁰ “Tök sü,
 mak sü,
 hájog sü,
 hetvenhétféle sü!
 Körösztollek tégödet...
 az ü szent vérivel,
 halálával,
 mönnyezi harangok hangjával,
 szűz szent Margit asszony szüzességivel,
 körösztoló szent János arany gyűrűjével”
 (Szőreg, formerly Torontál County; Kálmány 1891a, 69).

Enumeration can be a part of purely magical (command) forms or of religious (reference) texts. One example of the plentiful, “endless” enumeration of attributes is the following text used against nightmare, recorded in 1545: Grandeur of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost; truth of the Lord God, grandeur of Jesus, shedding of the blood of Jesus, the glory of his holy crown of thorns, dignity and grandeur of his crucifix, dignity of his holy crown, the sacred milk of the Virgin Mary; glory and grandeur of the saints of heaven (M. J. 1898, 324). Data that refer to semi-official use are also rich in this form: references in the official exorcism texts are repeated almost verbatim in the above-mentioned prayer, which is used when the magical baton aimed at finding treasure is shot out. The text was noted down in an almost unaltered form several times over the centuries. The *Prayer against weapons* from the *Peer Codex*, from 1526, offers a similar example:

Oh, two living swords, oh, you lance,
I command thee,
by the ordeal of Christ,
and by his ascent to heaven,
by the capturing, annoyance, prayers
and all manner of torments
of our Lord Jesus Christ.¹¹

“Endless” enumeration also appears in different contexts, such as lists of the names and attributes of demons. The name of the demon also has to be spoken, otherwise it cannot be vanquished, as is clear even from the earliest textual relics of Christian benediction.¹² Thus, according to the medieval German *St. Galler Haussegen*:

¹¹ “O keth elö thör o the lancea...
parancoloth + en tü nektek...
Kristufnak kyn fenvedefenek,
menben menefenek myatta...
my wronk Iefus criftufnak
meg fogafanak, bozföfaganak, fohazkodafanak
es menden nemö kyn fcsenwedefenekh [miatta]...”
(*Peer-kódex*, 89).

¹² In connection with the demon’s name, see, for example, Jirku 1922.

Now, you Evil,
 you should learn [that I know]
 that your name is Evil.¹³

A frequent element of both clerical and lay charms in latterday Europe is the enumeration of all the demons and all of the names of the individual demons, which is clearly a pre-Christian legacy of exorcisms. Pradel offers a Babylonian formula very close in content to the latter (Pradel 1907, 331), or we can think of the formulas of *Atharvaveda* that list all types of worms and their place of origin and “family members” (Kuhn 1864, 139; Mylius 1978, 82). All over Europe, this kind of enumeration is a constant formula of several types of latterday charms for averting illness. Uttering the names becomes more effective if the magical devices of repetition and enumeration are employed.¹⁴ The most frequent method is repeating the name of the illness with varying attributes an indefinite number of times. German, Dutch or Scandinavian charms recorded in written form often list as many as 40 or 50 different types of illness. The attributes refer to the possible qualities of the illness or to the place that it occupies in the body. The opening words of a fifteenth-century semi-official charm aimed at expelling *gutta*¹⁵ run as follows:

I conjure you, guttas, meaning gout, evil, dumb, strokes, headaches, mother of evil and all types of gutta in the name of God the Father...¹⁶

¹³ “Wohlan, Wicht,
 du sollst wissen [daß ich weiß],
 daß du Wicht heissest...”
 (modern German transcription, Mettke 1976, 91).

¹⁴ On magic by enumeration as the basis of ancient Greek catalogue poetry, see Marôt 1960, 448. On this formula, see Pradel 1907, 355.

¹⁵ A disease name, meaning illnesses of the brain and nerves.

¹⁶ “Coniuro vos, guttas scilicet artalentam, arteticam, maleficam, nesciam, parlasiam, migraneam, matrem malorum et omnes guttas, per deum patrem...”
 (Franz 1909, II, 508).

A Hungarian prayer against abscess from 1656 mentions eight types of abscess: white (*feier*), blue (*kik*), purple (*sederges*), green (*zót*), male (*can*), rheumatism (*czus*), breeding (*fiias*) and running (*folio*) (Ipolyi 1872, 116–7).¹⁷ The following is an extract from a charm from Hungarians in Moldova, against erysipelas or St. Anthony's fire:

Blue holy fire,
green holy fire,
black holy fire,
all kinds of holy fire,
nine kinds of holy fire,
bewitched holy fire,
... holy fire,
Bone-hurting holy fire...¹⁸

A very common form of charms for expelling demons is a tripartite form of curse and blessing with references. Contrary to the magical structure of endless enumerations so common in lay charms, tripartite structures are always religious in content or clerical in origin, at least as regards European charms. (This is clearly related to the Holy Trinity.) These triple structures are common as parts of official exorcisms/benedictions. This is the basic structure of storm-averting benedictions, too; but the texts of healing benedictions also contain a number of variants of triple forms of blessings and curses. Thus, for example, the following is an extract from a text aimed at curing diseases of the eyes.

¹⁷ One of our oldest records of this type is the formula in the Atharvaveda that addresses all worms and all "family members" of worms (Kuhn 1864, 139).

¹⁸ "Kik orbánc,
zöld orbánc,
feketi orbánc,
minden moldu orbánc,
kilenc moldu orbánc,
igizett orbánc,
találász [?] orbánc,
sonthányó orbánc..."
(Szabófalva/Săbăoani, Neamț County, Romania, Kallós 1966, 154–5).

May God the Father cure you,
 May God the Son cure you,
 May the Holy Ghost cure you and bring you light. Amen.¹⁹

These tripartite religious texts of demon-averting benedictions were also taken up by lay, rural practitioners of blessings. According to a Transylvanian Saxon text noted down between 1650 and 1652, which can “already” be seen as a charm, runs as follows:

God the Father sends you away,
 God the Son leads you
 And may the Holy Trinity lead you to a green wild forest...²⁰

Magical and Religious Similes

The simile is one of the most fundamental structures of magic, alongside commands and repetitive structures, and is the most obvious expression of sympathetic magic. Similes in purely magical texts can contain any sort of poetic imagery or even a reference to the action accompanying the charm—anything that the desired end may be compared to. For example, the following is a text for healing a child with scabs:

As quickly as this water runs down,
 May my child recover.²¹

¹⁹ “Sanet te deus pater,
 sanet te deus filius,
 sanet et illuminet te spiritus sanctus amen”
 (Franz 1909, II, 498).

²⁰ “Gott der Vater sendet dich,
 Gott der Sohn der führet dich,
 die heilige Dreifaltigkeit, die führe dich in einen grünen wilden Wald...”
 (*Corpus*, group *Unwetter*, no. 25).

²¹ “Amilyen hamar lefolyik ez a víz,
 olyan hamar gyógyuljon meg a gyermekem”
 (Jankó 1893, 250).

Religious similes compare the desired end to a sacred event or to the attribute of some sacred person: in other words, they comprise the above-mentioned attributes of the holy creatures in the magical structure of the simile. Let us see an example of a simile in a Hungarian text that has been imbued with Christian content and survived in a nobleman's archives from 1614. It shows a clear connection with semi-official charms that refer to the death of Christ:

Swarms of bees, descend ye upon Aaron's rod
and hang there,
just as our Lord God hung on the holy cross...²²

Another example is of a charm that was noted down in the twentieth century and was said while baking bread:

Multiply our bread
As you multiplied the five loaves of barley!²³

Varied examples of religious contents incorporated in magical structures are so-called *epic charms* (a *historiola* in a simile), which we cannot discuss here for want of space.

Religious Texts as Amulets

Protests on behalf of the church against the use of amulets or the amulet-like use of benedictions prove that this highly magical application of objects and texts was extremely common in clerical practice, too (Franz 1909, II, 62–3, 435–8, and so on).

²² “Méheknek raja, ti meg szálljatok Áron vesszejére
és meg figgjetek
miképpen meg figgede Urunk Isten az szent keresztfán...”
(*Radvánszky-archívum*, class V, batch 14, point 615).

²³ “Szaporítsd meg a kenyeret,
mint az öt árpakenyeret ahogy megszorítottad!”
(Nógrádsipek, Nógrád County, collected by Éva Pócs). Cf. John, 6:5–15.

For example, the motif of the *Tree of Jesse* (the genealogical tree of Jesus) has been used in diverse variants all over Southern, Central, Northern and Western Europe to ease birth pains. It was usually used in Latin but appeared in local vernacular variants even in early textual relics (for instance on a slip of paper that was either attached to the belly of a woman in childbirth or was eaten by her). It was also part of benedictions spoken during childbirth (e.g. Franz 1909, II, 199–201) and is still known today for varied purposes in the contemporary rural use of charms.²⁴ In the case of this motif we find some logical connection between the contents of the text and the context of use. However, as regards, for example, the motif of reference to *the happy hour* (the hour of the birth of Jesus), there is a full discrepancy between the desired end and the contents of the text, in other words we are speaking about a *par excellence* amulet-like use of the text, a magical textual amulet. This motif has been known to stand on its own (but also in the most varied contexts) as part of the practice of charms throughout the whole of Central and Western Europe; it also appears in a German charm noted down in the eleventh century (Mettke 1976, 97). According to a Hungarian record dating to after 1635, the following charm should be used in order to cure a horse that had over-eaten by being said three times before giving the horse water:

There's never been a happier hour
than that in which our Lord was born.²⁵

We can also consider the use of the paraphrase of the text “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us” of St. John’s Gospel (John 1:14) as an amulet text that was noted down in many places in Europe. The following is a Hungarian text against epilepsy from after 1511.

²⁴ For a frequent motif in archaic prayers, see Erdélyi 1976, 134, 182, 185, etc. For the same in other genres, see Dömötör 1974, 132–8, and Bálint 1943, 38, referring to connections with the Christmas liturgical traditions.

²⁵ “Soha nem vót boldogb óra,
mind az melyben Urunk született”
(Radvánszky-archívum, 1107, point 37. nineteenth-century copy).

The word of the Lord God
in the womb of the Virgin Mary
truly became a body,
which is our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.²⁶

For a modern Hungarian example I would like to quote a charm against sore throats collected in the twentieth century—one of many similar charms. The healer made the sign of the cross over the aching throat and then over himself or herself, saying:

The Angel of the Lord greeted the Virgin Mary and she conceived in her womb²⁷ (Szaján, formerly Torontál County, Kálmány 1882, 112)

As is commonly known, in amulet texts we often encounter a nonsensical medley of Latin or, occasionally, Greek fragments, or other magical words and names, most of which are Hebrew phrases mediated by the clerical corpus. It is the same situation with amulet texts that people swallow or carry about their body. Using foreign and incomprehensible texts was always seen as characteristic of the repertoire of a professional magician (Webster 1948, 94). As the clerical corpus approximated to popular usage, the seemingly nonsensical portion of originally clerical texts automatically became a part of the toolkit, not of the clerical professional, but of the peasant specialist who used this to enhance his prestige and the effectiveness of his devices. Whether a religious textual amulet makes sense or not, this kind of use of text proves that displaying any kind of religious text as a weapon was suited to breaking the power of Satan.

²⁶ “Atya Úristennek igije,
Zewsz Máriának méhében
bizon test is leen
az mi urunk Jézus Krisztus. Ámen”

(Magyary-Kossa 1940, 136). Note found in a missal from 1511 mixed in with Latin prayers, written on a slip of paper that had to be worn hung round the neck.

²⁷ I.e. a slight variant of the first verse of the *Angelus*.

Nevertheless, of all religious texts and fragments used independently, most of those known as charms or amulets were pieces that somehow referred to the power of “C”. Thus, for instance, the text that starts with “Christus regnat”, quoted above from the Peer Codex (*Contra febres*), was an amulet text widely used over the greater part of Europe, which also became a frequent motif of charms. The basic idea of exorcisms whereby “God is mightier than the demon” (Franz 1909, I, 515) frequently appears in simple formulations. One such example is a medieval German text:

Christ was born,
Earlier than the wolf or the thief.²⁸

A Hungarian text against the evil eye goes as follows:

The Lord’s word is mightier
than the gaze of the eyes.²⁹

Perhaps the most important tendency in the use of charms within the oral transmission practice of the Hungarian peasantry is shown when the texts that either were religious or had assumed a religious character through use by the church were adapted to their concrete needs and purposes, their lay and profane methods. Thus texts that “made no sense” were transformed to “make sense”. In any emergency of everyday life, where charms were a necessary component, it was possible to transform a more or less religious text in such a way as to clearly express the specific aim of the moment. Let us mention an example of this tendency: the variant of the tripartite benediction mentioned earlier is here “adjusted” to the situation of putting the bread in the oven:

²⁸ “Christ wurde geboren
Eher als Wolf oder Dieb”
(modern German transcription, Mettke 1976, 89).

²⁹ “Nagyobb az Úristen igéje,
mint a szemek nézése”
(Dávod, Bács County, collected by Tamás Grynaeus in the 1960s).

May God the Father bless you,
May God the Son bless you,
May the Lord the Holy Ghost bless you,
May God the Father bake you
May God the son bake you,
May the Lord the Holy Ghost bake you
So you come out risen nice and high.³⁰

Magic and Religion—Demons and Saints

The parallel appearance of certain magical and religious contents is present both in religious charms with a reference formula and in official exorcism texts. In parallel with the principle of “naming evil” mentioned earlier, speaking the names of God, Jesus and the saints is also known in many different contexts and as a constant formula of several types of charms. I quote from a German charm (against the evil eye) recorded in the last century:

Get away you devilish spirit,
Do you know him who is called Christ?³¹

This text makes a very clear reference to the power struggle expressed in exorcisms: the weapons of power B need to be overcome by the similar or more powerful weapons of power C: in this case one name by another. The same power struggle is reflected also in the texts in which the domain of Satan and the demons is faced by the domain of

³⁰ “Áldjon meg az Atyaisten,
áldjon meg a Fiúisten,
áldjon meg a Szentlélek Úristen.
Süttessen meg az Atyaisten,
süttessen meg a Fiúisten,
süttessen meg a Szentlélek Úristen,
hogy szép dombos legyél!”
(Zagyvarékas, Szolnok County, collected by Éva Pócs in 1962).

³¹ “Packe dich, du Teufelgeist!
Kennst du den, der Christus heißt?...”
(*Corpus*, group *Berufung-Beschreibung*, no. 81).

Christ and the saints, the godly sphere. This is often expressed through formal solutions that we might almost call inventive. For instance, the enumeration of the names and attributes of Jesus and the saints appears in parallel with the name(s) of the demon(s), with the same “endless” plenitude as the former or in exactly the same number. A sixteenth-century German text used as an amulet lists 110 names of the Virgin Mary.

These are the names of our sweet Lady: [...] the Way, the Virgin, the Rod [i.e. of the Tree of Jesse, Tree of Life, and so on], the Woman, the Dawn, the Flower, the Cloud, the Queen...³²

A ninth-century benediction text used against shivering enlists seven saints (from the *Legend of the seven sleepers of Ephesus*) to vanquish the seven fever demons (“the seven sisters”). This text has also preserved the names of the figures of fever demons known from folk belief.

... You seven holy sleepers, Maximianus, Malchus, Martinianus, Dionysius, Iohannes, Seraphim and Constantinus, pray for N, servant of the Lord...

I conjure you, you shivers and fevers, who are the seven sisters, whether you are of midday or midnight, every day or the second day, the third day or the fourth day, whether from the forest or from Judea, Hebrew or any other kind; I conjure you by the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost that you may have no power to hurt this servant of the Lord...³³

The juxtaposition of B and C, in other words the power struggle, can also be expressed by a parallel of the *smaller* and the *larger quantity*. Sometimes the struggle is between unequal opponents: the greater

³² “Das sind die Namen Unser lieben Frauen:... Via + Virgo + Virga + Femina + Aurora + Flos + Nubes + Regina...” (Hampp, 1966, 111).

³³ “... Sancti VII dormientes Maximianus, Malchus, Martinianus, Dionysius, Iohannes, Seraphim, Constantinus, orate pro famulo domini N...”

Coniuro vos, frigores et febres—VII sorores sunt—sive meridianas, sive nocturnas, sive cotidianas, sive secundarias, sive tercianas, sive quartanas, sive silvanas, sive iudeas, sive hebreas, vel qualicunque genere sitis, adiuro vos per patrem et per filium et per spiritum sanctum ut non habeatis licentiam nocere huic famulo dei...” (Franz 1909, II, 482–3).

power of the divine sphere over the demonic is expressed. One variant of a Hungarian type in Transylvania runs like this:

Each time the spell was cast on him
a thousand times more angels guarded him.³⁴

Counting charms are a widespread magical device—the religious parallel to this is a line of numbers expressing the superior power of C. The declining numbers in counting charms were originally used with the basic idea of “just as the numbers decline so may trouble decline” in order to “count down” countable things. They were also used to cure various demonic illnesses, as the first European record from the fourth century shows:

Nine gland sisters,
eight gland sisters...³⁵

It is interesting to compare this with a fragment from a fifteenth-century benediction that opposes a growing line of numbers of saints against illness:

I conjure you, cataract,
by the Virgin Mary,
by the 3 evangelists,
by the 12 apostles
and all the saints,
so you may reduce.³⁶

³⁴ “... valahányszor megigézte,
annyi ezer angyal megórijze”
(Gyimesfelsőlök/Lunca de Jos, Harghita County, Romania, Kallós 1966, 150).

³⁵ “Novem glandulae sorores,
octo glandulae sorores...”
(Heim 1982, 491–2).

³⁶ “Coniuro te, macula,
per sanctam Mariam,
per III evangelistas,
per duodecim apostoles
et per omnes sanctos,
quod tu recedas...” (Franz 1909, II, 496).

Priests and Peasants— Benediction, Exorcism and Charms

The close connection between clerical benedictions and folk charms is easiest to capture at the point where there is also a functional connection, in the case of texts that were used to the same end by priests and laypersons. The fact that the role of a priest who cures and blesses was “taken over” is clearly reflected by texts that refer to this role and activity directly, including their content. Thus, besides the textual stock, the practical function fulfilled in everyday village life could also be inherited. One such role is that of the healing and exorcising priest, which became practically extinct in the area of Western Christianity by the twentieth century, unlike the practice of the Eastern church. The memories of healing by medieval priests and monks in monasteries were mainly kept alive by popular incantations that had originally been benediction texts declaimed over various diseases. The situation is somewhat similar with regard to exorcism. Exorcism *par excellence* means chasing the devil out of the body that it had come to possess—but in fact any other form of benediction is also based on a ritual of ousting the devil. By performing benedictions and exorcism the church was carrying out an anti-demon activity that used and integrated both the textual legacy of the anti-demon practice of oriental antiquity together with the Hellenistic belief in demons, and the formulas of popular magic used to expel illness demons and send them out of the body.³⁷ Several textual types are known from the practice of both the Eastern and the Western church that are related both to the demon belief of the Ancient Orient and the charm formulas of rural healers (used in Southern and Southeastern Europe until modern times). Due to exorcism texts that found their way into the popular practice of charms, the majority of healing charms used in Hungary in the twentieth century were exorcisms of the Devil.

There are a number of other parallels between healing texts and benedictions, that are present in some textual motifs reminiscent of exor-

³⁷ On the Hellenistic belief in demons, which also incorporated Greek and ancient Oriental influences, and on the “demonisation” of the Christian religion, see Stemplinger 1922; Nilsson 1974, 516–20.

cism rites. I note that these are also connected with beliefs about the illness demons that invade the body—beliefs that are alive in Eastern Europe to this day. At the same time they represent pagan concepts of the devil invading the body. Connections are complex: some of the “folk” illness demons known from Eastern European belief systems in the twentieth century seem to have been transmitted precisely in incantation texts by church and lay healers via Byzantium.

A widespread textual motif that contains a pre-Christian concept and clearly magical parallels is the “part by part from the body” formula. The basis of this is the belief that all parts of the body must be listed, because the demon will not reveal its whereabouts, so one needs to name all parts of the body in order to be sure that the one where the demon hides has been named and so it can be successfully expelled (Franz 1909, II, 580; Pradel 1907, 351–2). The healer progresses from one body part to the other (usually from the brain/head towards the feet) in order to perform the exorcism. Besides formulas of the Atharvaveda for expulsion from the body,³⁸ the oldest Egyptian healing charm in the *Ebers papyrus* also contains a list of the body parts: the healer expels “... whatever is harmful from my head, from my neck, from my shoulders, from my flesh...” (Kákossy 1974, 49). Exorcisms and semi-official benedictions from the ninth to the thirteenth century also often contain this formula for warding off the devil. For example:

Get out quickly,
From his head, from his hair,
From this man, from the crown of his head, from his forehead
And from his eyebrows and his eyes...
... from his spine and his marrow.³⁹

³⁸ German record: “Aus den Augen, aus der Nase, aus den Ohren... vertreib ich das Schwind hiermit aus von dir” (Kuhn 1864, 67).

³⁹ “Exite velociter,
de capite illius et de capillis eius,
de isto homine, de vertice, de fronte,
de superciliis, de oculis [and a further 30 body parts]
... de spineta et de medullis”
(Franz 1909, II, 605).

By way of parallel I offer a Hungarian popular charm against skin disease:

I say to you, pustule,
go out of the head and from the brain
go out of the arms and the legs and the teeth,
or if you don't I'll catch you
and carry you up to the snowy mountains.⁴⁰

The following Hungarian charm from the Nyitra/Nitra region (Slovakia), makes reference to washing the body in order to cure it.

I wash the squeezing spell off N
from his head, from the front of his head,
from his eyes, the bulges of his eyes,
from his mouth, from his chest...
May your pain disperse
just as the Lord disperses the clouds in the sky...⁴¹

These texts quote the benediction formula, which progresses from body part to body part in expelling illness in a fragmented but intelligible fashion and illustrates the conscious fulfilling of this role by adopting the use of the first person singular. These structures that enumerate body parts also use the “magical structure” of endless enumer-

⁴⁰ “Azt mondom neked, pokolvar,
hogy menj ki a fejéből s a feje velejéből
s a karjaiból, s a lábaiból, s a fogaiból...
mert ha ki nem mégy,
megfoglak, s éppen a havasba viszlek...”
(Hungarian record from Transylvania, Alba County, Romania; Lázár 1896, 106–7).

⁴¹ “... én lemosom szorítását, igézetjit N-nek,
fejibű, fej elejibű,
szemibű, szeme pupaibű,
szájábű, mellibű...
Úgy oszoljon el a fájdalmad,
mint az égen szétoszlatja az Úristen a felhőket...”
(Zsére/Žirany, Nitra County, Slovakia, collected by Judit Morvay).

ations. A very clear instance of imbuing them with religious content is encountered in certain types of charms used by Romanians and Hungarians in Moldova. Through the usual “route” of progress through the body the Virgin Mary finds her way into the patient’s body. According to a Hungarian text from Moldova,

The Blessed Virgin Mary saw him,
may she find her way into his body, his heart,
his every little bone.⁴²

The Virgin Mary’s entry into the body at the same time means the departure of the demon, in accordance with the principle of exorcisms whereby “the body is the habitat of either God or the demon”. Franz quotes the following words of expulsion from the legend of a saint: “Depart, Satan, from the body of this woman and give room to the Holy Ghost” (Franz 1909, II, 555).

Another recurring formula of twentieth-century healing texts is “gripping with five fingers”, which evokes the priest laying on his hand. The “baptism” of the patient refers to the baptism ceremony aimed at expelling demons:

I grip you by my five fingers
May the Father break you,
the Son ruin you,
the entire Holy Trinity disperse you!
I baptise you
in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost
the Lord
just as St. John had baptised Christ our Lord in the water
of the Jordan.⁴³

⁴² “... Boldogságos szép Szűz Mária meglátta,
szálljon bé testjibe, szüvibe,
minden csontocskájába...”

(Egyházaskozár, Baranya County, Hungarian settlers from Moldova, collected by Éva Pócs in 1959).

⁴³ “... Én téged megfoglak az öt ujjammal!
Az Atya törjön,

In addition to healing, the richest field of the benediction rituals of the medieval church was praying for rain, as well as fending off bad weather and hail. An important task of the priesthood was to ward off and keep at bay the storm demons (latterly identified with the Christian Satan) who bring heavy rain and hailstorms with the help of curses, blessings, sacramentalia, processions or the Eucharist (Franz 1909, II, 1–123). To avert storms and hail appears in exorcisms as disarming Satan, who would bring about these disasters. The priest would stand in the main square of the village to chant the texts against hailstorms, make the sign towards the four points of the compass (“Signo te aer...”) and repeat the text each time (Franz 1909, II, 79). A fragment from a benediction text runs like this:

I sign you, clouds, with the sign of the holy cross, the sign
of our Lord Jesus Christ
who lives and reigns.
I sign you, you clouds, with the sign of Christ, in the name
of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.
I sign you, holy, holy is the Lord, the God of Hosts.⁴⁴

Clerical practice of benedictions for averting storms or bringing rain had the same function as that of weather magicians within the communities: both played a part in the crisis situations of everyday life. This meant that church magic also came into the sphere of early modern rural weather magic. A text used for driving away hailstorms, which was recorded in Lausanne in 1500, sent away the demons but also

a Fiju rontson,
a tejjes Szentháromság elosztasson!
Én téged mögköröszöllek
az Atyának, Fijunak, Szentlélek Istennek nevébe,
valamint Krisztus Urunkat szent János a Jordán vizibe
mökköröszöltöte”

(Szőreg, formerly Torontál County, Kálmány 1891b, 152–3).

⁴⁴ “... Signo vos, nubes, signo sancte crucis et passionis domini nostri Iesu Christi, qui vivit et regnat.
Signo vos, nubes, signo Christi, in nomine patris et filii et spiritus sancti.
Signo vos, sanctus, sanctus dominus deus sabaoth...”
(Franz 1909, II, 76).

spoke against the *evil magicians* (*incantatores malorum*) who invited the demons for assistance:

I adjure you, angels of the underworld;
evil wizards
and all manner of servants of Satan,
who can unite the waters and the winds
to soothe the storms,
so that they cannot cause harm in these parts,
or in those we have named above
go to the distant hills and dreary places,
where no man lives
where no one ploughs or sows...⁴⁵

In fact this is the type of charm, referred to as *Begegnungssegen*, which is known from peasant use all over Europe and has textual relics going back to the third century (Ohrt 1936).⁴⁶ Besides Hungarian examples, we may quote German and Austrian data for the use of this benediction text within the practice of lay magicians. A text known from a sixteenth-century weather magician, Christoph Gostner from Pustertal (Tyrol), runs like this:

[get away]
to the highest mountains
where no cock crows
no lamb bleats,

⁴⁵ “Adiuro vos, angelos tenebrarum
et omnes incantatores malorum
et omnes ministros sathane,
quibus aquas coadunare ventis permittitur,
ut tempestates mitigentur,
ne nocentes sint in finibus istis et in illis,
quas superius diximus,
et ite in diversis montibus et locis desertis,
ubi nullus homo habitat
nec aratur nec seminatur...”
(Franz 1909, II, 102).

⁴⁶ See the Hungarian text corpus in Pócs 1985–1986, II, 442–70.

no ox calls,
 ...
 where you can do no harm...⁴⁷

Variants of the text that lived on in the practice of twentieth-century village magicians and healers also illustrate the interaction of priestly benediction and popular/lay magic. The majority of our Hungarian records are about countering the effects of the evil eye and averting storms. One variant from the Gyimes region is as follows:

Go away, go away you storm and icy rain to the rocks
 where no one ploughs and no one sows,
 where no black cockerel crows,
 where no black dog barks,
 where no black horse neighs,
 where no leavened bread is eaten...⁴⁸

The tripartite benediction against storms mentioned above lived on amongst the peasantry, too. In the twentieth century, in Hungarian Catholic villages the typical old woman or wise man with the mission of “waving away” or “chasing away” the hail clouds used to do the same as the priests had done earlier, but the charm, built from the elements of the benediction, was shorter:

⁴⁷ “auff das höchste gebürg,
 da khein han kräth,
 kein mader meet,
 da kein ox lieet,
 da khein pluemb blieet
 das es niemand kheinen schaden thuet...”
 (1595; Behringer 1988, 203).

⁴⁸ “Menj el, menj el te zápor jeges eső a kősziklára,
 ahol nem szántanak, nem vetnek,
 ahol a fekete kakasok nem kikerülnek,
 a fekete kutyák nem ugatnak
 a fekete lovak nem nyerítnek,
 és ahol kovászos kenyérral nem élnek...”
 (Gyimesfelsőlok/Lunca de Jos, Harghita County, Romania, Kallós 1966, 156).

May the Father disperse you,
may the Son disperse you,
may the Holy Ghost disperse you⁴⁹

In the Middle Ages, clerical and popular rites of weather magic lived in parallel, indeed in mutually beneficial interaction with each other. The new concepts of the early modern period stamped rural magicians with the demonological stigma and turned the two areas against each other. Due to the archaic opposition whereby what is our own is good and what is other is bad, each party became an enemy from the view-point of the other. The priest became the people's own good magician, while the village magician became the bad and hostile magician who carried the "pagan" tradition. It is no accident that in the eyes of the village people, who viewed the scene "from below", the inverse of this fiction also came into existence: According to Greek, Romanian, Bulgarian and Hungarian belief legends of the twentieth century, the priest performs a "counter-magic" in opposition to the beneficial operation of the weather magicians, and he is the one to bring hailstorms to the village (Andrian 1894, 33; Kretzenbacher 1968, 122; Bošković-Stulli 1953, 338; Đorđević 1953, 25–26; Hegyi 1937, 472–74).

*

Apart from the few examples quoted above I had no room here to discuss all the variants and levels of the connections. If I had had, the picture would still not be complete. A full summary of the subject is not possible, partly because the Hungarian wealth of benedictions, meaning the local rituals used before the unification of the *Rituale Romanum* or later material diverging from it, has hardly been explored. We attach high hopes in this regard to work in progress by Dániel Báth.⁵⁰ A more

⁴⁹ "Oszlasson el az Atya,
oszllasson el a Fiú,
oszllasson el a Szentlélek"

(Zagyvarékas, Szolnok County, collected by Éva Pócs in 1962).

⁵⁰ Since the time that the present paper was written, Dániel Báth has published his work presenting and exploring a rich collection of benedictions in Hungary (Báth 2010). This will lend considerable dynamism to further research. However, for the present article, regrettably, I was not able to use Báth's book.

comprehensive investigation would not only provide the solution to certain questions of origin and historical change. The generic definitions of charms, prayers, benedictions and curses could also be fine-tuned, and the definition of charms as a genre in general needs to be rethought.

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MANUSCRIPTS

Corpus = Corpus der deutschen Segen und Beschwörungen. (Archives in the former *Institut für Volkskunde der Akademie für Wissenschaften*, Berlin, DDR).

Radvánszky-archívum = A Radvánszky család archívuma (Archives of the Radvánszky family), *Országos Levéltár* (National Archives), Budapest, fonds P 566.

CHAPTER VIII

Benediction and Exorcism in Early Modern Hungary

Dániel Bárh

The textual relationship between medieval ecclesiastical benedictions and exorcisms and modern peasant incantations that have the function of benediction or malediction has long been recognised in European cultural history. Relying on the analyses and collections published at the beginning of the twentieth century, researchers of the history of incantations accept without dispute the influence that the ecclesiastical texts had on peasants' texts. It is also well known that early medieval ecclesiastical benediction and curse liturgy relied heavily on ancient Greek and pre-Christian traditions. In Hungarian scholarship, the achievements of two scholars in research into the history of incantations and the relationship between liturgy and folk tradition should be mentioned: the inventive observations of Sándor Bálint (Bálint 1944, 99–128) and the comprehensive investigations by Éva Pócs.¹ Pócs has convincingly proved that more than half of the Hungarian peasant incantation texts can be traced back to ecclesiastical texts. She has also presented an overview of the process by which medieval ecclesiastical benediction practice turned into a “semi-popular” and then a folk practice. Nevertheless, she consciously left several questions open, since in Hungarian scholarship the collection, systematisation and publication of medieval and early modern ecclesiastical benediction and exorcism texts have not yet been achieved.

¹ After other articles, Pócs 2002, 173–211.

Thus, taking into consideration the poor character of the medieval Hungarian sources, and the still-awaited survey of the transitional period following the Middle Ages, when I began my research, almost ten years ago, I decided to focus on the period between the sixteenth and the eighteenth century (Bárth 1999, 359–98; Bárth 2006, 301–20). My objective was to explore the characteristic features of, as well as the differences between, the official and the non-official or semi-official ecclesiastical practice. Having completed the collection and exploration of the Hungarian sources, it became necessary to place my investigation in a Central European perspective and framework of interpretation. In this brief paper I wish to report on the results of this endeavour, and the probable outcomes of the research project.

The most basic tool of so-called white magic (see Makkai 1983, 106–16) of the medieval church was the set of benediction practices with the help of which all sorts of demands of believers could be satisfied, whether these were physical or mental problems, concerns of everyday life or the challenges of nature, and so on. The clergy blessed everything and cleansed everything from demonic powers, including meadows, fields, plants, fruit trees, vineyards, yards, houses, rooms, kitchens, fireplaces, dishes, wine, bread, farm buildings, utensils, boats, fish ponds, animals and fodder, as well as people, those who were preparing for a pilgrimage and those who had returned from a pilgrimage, women in labour and after childbirth, children of various ages, and so on. Priests cured various diseases from fever to impotence, they prayed against storms and asked for rain, and with suitable ceremony they brought under control plague, fire and flood and anything that threatened people.

This supply of benedictions was transformed in Western Europe during the course of what has been identified by historical anthropology and the history of *mentalités* as the “decline of magic”. Keith Thomas (Thomas 1971, 25–50), Bob Scribner (Scribner 1987, 1–47), Jean Delumeau (Delumeau 1971) and others have discussed the early modern change in ecclesiastical perspective, which was due to the joint influence of Protestantism and Catholic renewal. The publication of the *Rituale romanum* (1614) and related reforming and unifying endeavours are considered a foundation stone of these changes (Sodi and Arcas 2004). It is no accident that the great work on medi-

eval ecclesiastical benedictions by Adolph Franz investigates its subject material up until the publication of the *Rituale romanum* (Franz 1909). Yet Franz was well aware of the fact that the endeavours of the higher church authorities did not result in sudden and fundamental transformation. In Southern Europe, in the south German and Austrian provinces, in Bohemia, in Poland, in Hungary and in Croatia (and certainly elsewhere too) these processes emerged only after some delay. In these areas, besides this delay, traces of subterranean, semi-official survivals can also be observed. Taking into consideration the frontier status of the region, in the case of Hungary it is especially interesting to note the influence that Orthodoxy, which was untouched by these sorts of ecclesiastical reforms, could have. The other basic set of questions that can be asked is as follows: who mediated, and by what means, the ecclesiastical corpus of benediction texts in Latin towards popular culture, via what channels were these texts translated into the vernaculars, and which clerical stratum played the leading role in the transmission, spread and, most of all, in the use of these texts?

As is the case with every similar overview, it is necessary first of all to describe the official ecclesiastical practice. In Hungary, in the case of the most dominant diocese, it was Cardinal Péter Pázmány who was the first to compile his influential ritual, entitled *Rituale Strigoniense*, following the pattern of the revised Roman rite (*Rituale* 1625). However, this service book, first published in 1625, taking advantage of the relative freedom of the bishops permitted by the Pope, does not follow the Roman pattern literally, but includes differences in harmony with regional peculiarities—and this is the case with regard to benedictions. Besides those benedictions that can be found in the *Rituale romanum* (such as, for example, benedictions of water, candles, houses, wedding beds, ships, vineyards, pilgrims, fruit, oil, and Easter-tide foods), it also contains the benediction of wine on St. John's Day (December 27), three valuable coins at Epiphany (January 6), apples for curing diphtheria on the third of February, new grapes on the Day of the Transfiguration of Our Lord (August 6), and finally herbs on Assumption Day (August 15). It is also significant that the churching of women after childbirth and their initiation after the consummation are also inserted into the official ritual. The application of these benedictions remained a widespread custom in Hungary until the last third of the twentieth century (Bárh 2005a, 139–42 and 211–9).

It is a distinctive feature of Hungarian liturgical history that the compilers of rituals in each diocese relied on Pázmány's service book for centuries. They did so in the case of benedictions as well. Yet some minor differences emerged, in accordance with local needs. For example, in the eighteenth-century ritual of the Kalocsa Primacy (in southern Hungary) benediction against floods was inserted, since this area was often exposed to the flooding of the rivers Danube and Tisza (*Rituale* 1738). Also in Kalocsa, at the beginning of the twentieth century, when the ritual was being revised, a survey was carried out among the parish clergy, inquiring about which benedictions they considered were missing from the old ritual (or, rather, what the believers missed). From the responses, it turns out that besides the official printed ritual, for centuries a subterranean manuscript tradition had persisted, which, in practice, covered a wider range of benediction activity—as a response to the congregation's demands (Báráth 2006, 315).

Monks played an extremely significant role in Hungary in the transmission of this subterranean practice, generating an undeniable belief in medieval benediction texts and being involved in the transmission of the practice itself. The considerable role of the monks is obvious from the preserved manuscripts as well as from the semi-officially printed collections. It is not surprising that out of the monastic orders in the first instance the folk-friendly pastoral care of the Franciscans should be mentioned. The Franciscan mentality is transmitted by a collection of prayers and benedictions entitled *Arca Domini* (*Arca Domini* 1774), which was published several times in the eighteenth century, as well as the Transylvanian collection from 1749 entitled *Fasciculus benedictionum* (*Fasciculus benedictionum* 1749), which was applied especially for hardships caused by weather. It also can be established that the *Manuale benedictionum* published in 1685 in Einsiedeln was used among Hungarian Franciscan friars (*Manuale* 1685).

Besides the Franciscan friars, in this region the Jesuits also played an important role in benediction practice. One of the most frequently used alternative collections of benedictions is associated with the Jesuits (*Fasciculus triplex* 1739). In addition, the Jesuits played a leading role in the Catholic missions in Hungary and in Transylvania in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Jesuit missionaries, the first order to appear in the territory under Turkish occupation, favoured

this “the weapon of wonder” (Molnár 1999, 255). It was necessary for proselytisation as well as for strengthening the faith of Catholic believers. According to missionary reports, the priests encountered possessed people and patients suffering from various nervous conditions, whom the missionaries healed with exorcism and with various sacramentals—for example with holy water of Saint Ignatius, relics, images, coins of saints, Agnus Dei waxen medals and rosaries (Molnár 2005, 145–7). Their activity was very popular with Orthodox believers and even with Muslim Turks. The triumphant missionary narratives, in spite of all their exaggerations and bias, highlight the early modern intensity and reception of Jesuit benediction and malediction practice.

Members of the third-largest Hungarian monastic order, the Benedictines, also participated in this kind of activity. A manuscript collection of benedictions (*Sacra arca benedictionum*) preserved on Saint Martin’s Hill, in Pannonhalma, contains several special quasi-medieval benedictions. For instance, the benediction of gold, myrrh and incense at Epiphany against incubi and succubi, the analogical benediction of gold against jaundice, in addition to benedictions against fever and bladder problems, and the benediction of lozenge, lavender, rose, camphor and sulphur to be used for exorcism (*Sacra arca benedictionum*, 1697).

The body of texts under survey has been compiled on the basis of these important collections preserved in Hungary. This corpus contains about 150–160 benedictions and exorcisms in prayer form. The length of the texts varies from ten lines to ten pages. This number of texts in itself is an argument against the former view that the medieval arsenal of benediction practices and texts was in decline. Besides the transmission of medieval texts, the constant creation of new ones and the revival of former ones can also be observed in this period. On the basis of a comparative analysis of the texts it can be demonstrated that the corpus is basically of Central European character, and there are only a few texts whose specific Hungarian origin can be determined. Besides the often unidentifiable medieval sources, the source material of these benedictions is presumably made up of the extremely popular European collections, which were mostly related to monastic practice. For example, the *Rituale franciscanum* by a Czech Franciscan friar, Bernardus Sannig, was published for the first time in 1685, and later had several editions (*Rituale franciscanum* 1685); it contains 150 benedic-

tions. Another instance is the collection by Gelasio di Cilia from 1709, entitled *Locupletissimus thesaurus*, which consisted of 176 benedictions (di Cilia 1709). The international character of the benedictions, besides their universal Latin language, is reinforced by those parts of the texts that refer to the free alternation of the saints' names: that is, the optional insertion of the names of those saints who were popular in a given region with the users of the texts.

In the case of some benediction types, the complicated route of the spread of texts in manuscript copies within a given monastic order can also be demonstrated. Lajos Katona, the prominent Hungarian folklorist, discovered at the beginning of the twentieth century in the Franciscan monastic quarters in Hungary a manuscript that included demon-expelling procedures (the protective slip of paper, seal, pen and ink as well as the text of the blessing). This manuscript goes back to the above mentioned collection by Sannig, and it must have been copied and transmitted in the middle of the eighteenth century (Katona 1902, 60–70 and 103–11).

Similarly, Austrian and Czech origin can be ascertained in the case of storm candles consecrated on the feast day of the martyrs SS. John and Paul (June 26), while Czech, Polish and Lithuanian parallel texts for bread consecration on St. Agatha's Day (February 5), which were used for protection against fire, have also been identified (Bárh 2006, 313–6). The latter benediction is especially interesting, since it is not of medieval origin. It was composed in the sixteenth century, and its spread in Central Europe is obviously related to Franciscan practice. Its popularity decreased only with the spread of the Florian cult in the eighteenth century (as this saint also protected people against fire), yet in regions under Franciscan influence the traces of bread consecrated against fire survived until the beginning of the twentieth century (Bárh 2005b, 85–93).

Besides the relationship between the modification of the cult of saints and changes in benediction trends, in the following pages I would like to highlight the importance of real persons who emerged from the lower clergy and monastic orders, and their role in the flourishing ecclesiastical benediction/malediction practice in early modern Europe. The case that I wish to present may be of relevance, as it is strongly connected to the early modern practice of great or ceremonial exorcism, only rarely mentioned so far. "Great exorcism" is distin-

guished by liturgical historians from the texts of “little exorcism” that emerged as part of benediction/malediction practice. Yet, according to historical sources, the highly popular ecclesiastical benediction practice was at some point expanded into the healing of demonic possession, and, vice versa, the main protagonists of the wave of great exorcisms inserted benedictions into their daily activity. This interrelatedness is reflected, for example, in a popular early modern exorcists’ manual, the *Flagellum et fustis daemonum* by Hieronymus Mengus (from 1697). This handbook also contains, together with the wide-ranging toolkit of blessings with which exorcism can be carried out, numerous benedictions fulfilling the same function (H. Mengus 1697).

In the course of my research project on the exploration of the historical corpus of benedictions, I encountered sources and data about the eighteenth-century activity of a Franciscan friar in a south Hungarian town, Zombor (Bárh 2005c. 1, 271–87). The Croatian-born monk, Rókus Szmendrovich, spent only two and a half years between 1766 and 1769 in this multi-ethnic (Croatian, Hungarian, German, Serb) and multi-religious (Roman Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox) town, but during this time his activity led to the largest exorcism scandal of eighteenth-century Hungary. The case has not yet been explored in Hungarian scholarship, and I intend to publish a micro-historical analysis of the case in the near future. I am convinced that the activity of Rókus Szmendrovich is of real importance for the history of *mentalités*, folkloristics and liturgical history. The reasons for Friar Rókus’s incredible popularity were his charismatic personality, his folk-friendly pastoral care and his excellent rhetorical and shriving ability, and, most of all, his healing techniques. Similarly to the seventeenth-century exorcist in Piedmont, in a case presented by Giovanni Levi in his *L’eredità immateriale*, this Franciscan monk in Zombor also applied relatively simple naturalistic medical care instead of personalistic medicine which explains diseases by several reasons (Levi 2001, 66–7). Friar Szmendrovich attributed most physical problems to demonic possession. After his first successful exorcism, not only the Catholics but also the Orthodox Serbs crowded to ask for his help. His activity, however, owing to denunciation, became problematic for the authorities in his diocese.

Friar Szmendrovich then argued that his exorcism resulted in the conversion of believers belonging to other denominations, and this

argument quietened down the ecclesiastical authorities for a while. Later, Szmendrovich was allowed to perform exorcisms only on the basis of the official ritual, in the presence of witnesses. Besides the ineffective Roman exorcism, Friar Rókus, of course, used several alternative handbooks and non-official benedictions, such as water mixed with consecrated oil, fumigations with consecrated plants and herbs, consecrated bread, images of saints, chapbooks and so on.

By all accounts Rókus Szmendrovich did an excellent job—at least from the believers' point of view. Out of the dozen monks of the local Franciscan friary, it was Rókus whom most town-dwellers called to administer the last sacrament and to hear patients' confessions, because, as the testimonies say, when he entered the house smiling, several people recovered at the mere sight of the friar. Then, after a long procedure, after repeated interrogations and tests, the church leaders removed the Franciscan friar from the territory of the diocese. Reading the friar's impassioned letters written in Vulgar Latin, one feels the difference, and the probable conflicts, between his attitude and that of the cold rationality of the official church, formed under the influence of ecclesiastical enlightenment, which, in the second half of the eighteenth century, was already widespread in Hungary.²

It may not be premature to propose that the conflict of the enlightened ecclesiastical leaders and the Franciscan exorcist in Zombor could be understood as an indicative expression of the final repression of early modern semi-official benediction practice. In the centuries to come this sort of ecclesiastical service was suppressed more and more, yielding ground to village specialists, who tried to supply answers to the challenges of human life with a complex body of texts, originating from diverse sources.

² Similarly to Johann Joseph Gassner, the famous German exorcist of the period, about whom Eric Midelfort has recently published an excellent monograph: Midelfort 2005.

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- complectens, cum suis benedictionibus, et omnibus requisitis ad eorum expulsi-
onem. Accessit Postremo pars secunda, quae Fustis daemonum inscribitur...
Venetiis.*
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MANUSCRIPTS AND PRINTED SOURCES

- Arca Domini* = *Arca Domini, selectam Deum, Divosque precandi, confitendi et communicandi methodum continens, olim ad usum et commoditatem Sacerdotum altissimi ad S. Aras litantium erecta, nunc denuo ad eorum spirituale solamen renovata, et multiplicibus absolutionum, benedictionum, et exorcismorum formulis locupletata omnium fidelium devotioni patet reserata*. Posenii, 1774.
- Fasciculus benedictionum* = *Fasciculus benedictionum, exorcismorum, et validissimarum conjurationum ad effugandas aëreas tempestates...* Csiksomlyó, 1749.
- Fasciculus triplex* = *Fasciculus triplex exorcismorum, et benedictionum in Romano-Catholica Ecclesia usitatorum, ex variis authoribus approbatis collectus et historiis, ac exemplis subinde illustratus...* Tyrnaviae, 1739.
- Manuale* = *Manuale benedictionum, rituumque ecclesiasticorum tam intra, quam extra Ecclesias occurrentium. Ex ritualibus, Romano, Constantiensi, aliarumque*

Dioecesium. Pro parochorum et sacerdotum omnium commodiore usu collectum. Editio tertia. Typis monasterii Einsidlensis, 1685.

Rituale = Rituale Strigoniense, seu formula agendorum in administratione Sacramentorum, ac caeteris Ecclesiae publicis functionibus. Jussu, et auctoritate illustrissimi ac reverendissimi Domini Petri Pazmany, Archi-Episcopi Strigoniensis. Nunc recenter editum. Posonii, 1625.

Rituale Franciscanum = Rituale Franciscanum continens varias absolutiones, benedictiones, conjurationes, exorcismos, ritus, ac alias caeremonias ecclesiasticas, ad utilitatem Christi fidelium, et praxim sacerdotum, maximae Ordinis S. Francisci; ex variis ritualibus coordinatum a P. Bernardo Sannig, Ord. S. Francisci Reform. Provinciae Bohemiae S. Wenceslai D. et M. Sacerdote, et iterato Ministro Provinciali dictae Provinciae. Neo-Pragae, 1685.

Rituale = Rituale Romano-Colocense, seu formula agendorum in administratione Sacramentorum et caeteris ecclesiae publicis functionibus rite obeundis observanda. ac in usum Colocensis, et com-provincialium dioecesium accomodata, et utilibus additamentis aucta. Auctoritate, opera, et impensis Reverendissimi P. D. Gabrielis Hermannii Dominici miseratione divina Metropolitanae Colocensis, et Bacsensis canonice unitarum ecclesiarum Archi-Episcopi. Budae, 1738.

Sacra arca benedictionum = Sacra arca benedictionum magni fundatoris religionum divi patriarchae Benedicti. (MS Pannonhalma, Library of Monastery, BKA 6). 1697.

CHAPTER IX

Baltic and East Slavic Charms

Daiva Vaitkevičienė

This article examines the parallels between Baltic (Lithuanian and Latvian) and East Slavic charms. Charm texts characterised by their common semantic and/or syntactic structure are regarded as typological parallels; along with them, universal charm motifs and complexes of images are also investigated.

With regard to origins, three groups of the Baltic-Slavic charm parallels can be distinguished:

- 1) *Genetic origins* (relics of the Balto-Slavic culture);
- 2) *Substratum origins* (the cultural substratum of the Eastern Balts, assimilated by the East Slavs between the sixth and eighth centuries AD in present-day Belarus and south-eastern Russia (Toporov and Trubachev 1962; Gimbutas 1962), and the Lithuanian substratum on the territory of western Belarus between the fourteenth and the twentieth century AD) (Gaučas 1939).
- 3) *Contact origins* (the Baltic–East Slav periphery; Slav immigrants in Lithuania and Latvia; migratory Christian plots).

Determining the origins of the charm parallels presents a very difficult and at times even an impossible task, particularly regarding the phenomena of folkloric substrata. Baltic and Slavic charm parallels have scarcely been investigated; among such studies only the work by Mariia Zavialova, *Balto-slavianskii zagovornyi tekst* (The Text of the Balto-Slavic Charm) could be mentioned (Zavialova 2006). The main part of her study focuses on the world view of the Lithuanians and Belarusians, as reflected in their charms; a separate chapter, however, deals with the analogues of the Baltic and Slavic charm themes from

a territorial perspective. In this chapter, parallels are mostly treated in terms of contact origins, while few genetic similarities are found. According to the author, congruities between Slavic and Baltic traditions are exceptionally scarce, and moreover, essentially all of them can be characterised by distinct traces of borrowing (Zavialova 2006, 201), and the themes most commonly migrate from the Slavic tradition to the Baltic one.

This assumption by M. Zavialova regarding the contact origins of the Baltic and Slavic charm parallels is mostly based on the Christian migratory charm types, which spread from Poland and Belarus, and appeared in Lithuania not earlier than the fifteenth century. Their dissemination in any substantial quantity became possible only after the conversion of the Lithuanians to Christianity in 1387–1413; the author also draws on materials from the Lithuanian and Belarusian periphery. Nevertheless, M. Zavialova discusses in her study several cases of the common charm types that display no obvious traces of mutual impact and therefore most probably stem from a common source; unfortunately, she mentions such cases only in passing. On the other hand, M. Zavialova uses hardly any Latvian data; although defining her work as a comparative study of Baltic and Slavic charms, she essentially confines herself to comparing Lithuanian and Belarusian-Russian-Polish materials.

This article attempts to reveal the existence of an archaic layer of common Baltic-Slavic charms (not only isolated texts). Some of the charm types discussed here are known from other traditions as well, for example, German, Estonian, and so on. Therefore this problem occasionally goes beyond the borders of the Baltic-Slavic cultural area.

The parallels in question may also be of substratum origin, particularly when charms common only to the Belarusians and Lithuanians/Latvians are dealt with; yet this problem is left aside here, as it requires a separate historical-geographical study. Analysis of the archaic Baltic and East Slavic charms revealed three categories of texts characterised by typological parallels:

- charms representing mythical themes or motifs;
- religious-ritual formulas;
- functional formulas.

Although the first category is the main focus of attention in this article, ritual and functional formulas will also be represented.

Common Mythical Patterns

Charms drawing on the common Baltic-Slavic world view and rooted in the broad folkloric and mythical context should be regarded as the most ancient typological parallels. Occasionally they go beyond the boundaries of the charm genre and become embedded in various other kinds of folklore, for example, in riddles, folksongs, legends, and so on. An interesting example of such charms is presented by the formulas based on the metaphor of impossibility, mentioning things that are possible only in the mythical world, like bird's milk, fern blossom, stone's water, stone's roots, stone's blood, and so on, as here:

A bird without milk,
a stone without roots,
a fern without blossom.
In the name of Jesus, let it help the brindled cow!¹

Not from the fern's blossom,
not from the stone's water,
from me, God's servant, no blood and no gore²

These charms list things that do not exist in the real world (a fern does not blossom, a stone has no roots, and so on); the negation of the connection is applied to refute the illness, the snake's venom, and the like, as here:

¹ "Paukštelis ba pieno,
akmuo ba šaknių,
papartys ba žiedo.
Per Jėzaus vardą tegul tai margai karvei pamačija!" (Lith.)
(Vaitkevičienė 2005, no. 11).

² "Не от попоротного цвету,
не от камени воды,
от меня, от раба Божия, ни крови, ни руды" (Rus.)
(Sbornik Maikova [Maikov's Compilation] 1994, 65, no. 165).

The stone without roots. Holy Mary.
 The bird without milk. Holy Mary.
 The snake without gristle. Holy Mary.³

Small bird without milk,
 The stone without blossom,
 The water without wing—
 Let you [illness] thus disappear!
 Let you perish forever!
 Amen.⁴

Such metaphors of impossibility are not only suggestive poetical devices; they also embody polysemous mythical images: the fern's blossom, allegedly opening on the summer solstice night, can endow humans with clairvoyance (to locate treasure, and open locks and so on) (Balys 1993, 234), the stone from which water springs is present in the creation myth, and according to folk narratives, the sacred stones can start bleeding when cut to pieces (Vaitkevičius 1997, 30–54), and so on. When the metaphor of impossibility is construed on the basis of a mythical image, the charm is charged not only with magical, but also with mythical powers. Such images can doubtlessly be regarded as relics of an archaic world view.

Similar archaic motifs can also be shaped into other kinds of folklore, for example, the popular Lithuanian riddle “What grows without roots, what flies without wings, what blossoms without flower? (stone, wind, fern)” (Grigas 1968, 662, no. 7566). Such riddles can also be found as part of ritual songs and wedding dialogues: similar ques-

³ “Akmuo ba šaknių. Sveika, Marija.
 Paukštis ba pieno. Sveika, Marija.
 Kirmėlė ba kramslo. Sveika, Marija”
 (Vaitkevičienė 2005, no. 9).

⁴ “Paukštelis be pieno,
 Akmuo be žiedo,
 Unduo be sparno.
 Teip tu (liga) prapulki!
 Pražūk unt umžių amžinuju
 Amen”
 (Vaitkevičienė 2005, no. 6).

tions are asked of the bride on her wedding day (Kazlauskienė and Stundžienė 1988, 47), and by answering them she is expected to prove her qualifications.

The charm and riddle themes are closely interrelated; for example, the repertoire of the Slavic charms contains certain mythical patterns that have been preserved in Baltic folklore only in the riddle form, as here:

A girl herded calves
And lost her keys.
The Moon found them,
The Sun hid them.⁵

The woman walks crying,
Losing the golden key.
The Moon sees it, the Sun takes it.⁶

The Virgin [Mary] was walking and lost her keys; the Sun came and found them. The Moon rose, the blood returned to its place. Sacred stars and the Most Holy Mother were walking across the sky holding the hand of her little son [...] Charm against the evil wind.⁷

A girl who loses keys (or, in some variants, scatters her pearl necklace) (Grigas 1968, 463, no. 5510) is deciphered as the goddess *Aušrinė* (the goddess of the Morning Star and the dawn) in the context of Baltic

⁵ “Varė pana tulukus
Ir pametė raktukus.
Mėnuo rado,
Saulė pakavojo” (Lith.)
(Grigas 1968, 464, no. 5513).

⁶ “Sievīņa iet raudādama,
Izkrit zelta atslēdzīņa:
Mēness redz, saule paņem” (Latv.)
(Ancelāne 1954, 225).

⁷ “Прачыстая ішла, ключы пагубіла, а соўнейка ішло ды ключы найшло. А месячык стаў ды на месце крой пастаў. Ды святыя звёздачкі, Пранасвенчая матачка па небу хадзіла, свайго сыночка за ручку вадзіла [...] Ад падвею” (Bel.)

mythology; in some variants of the riddle she is sometimes directly named *Aušra*, “dawn”. *Aušrinė* is an important Lithuanian goddess, interpreted by the researcher in mythology and semiotics A. J. Greimas as being the patroness of beauty, youth and good health. The myth of the wedding of the Sun and the Moon, in which *Aušrinė* becomes the Sun’s rival, seducing the Moon, belongs among the classical texts of Baltic mythology (Greimas 1990, 131–2). The trio comprising *Aušrinė*, Moon and Sun is described in the above-mentioned Lithuanian riddle. In the East Slavic charms, the Virgin Mary has also most probably replaced the dawn deity *Zaria*: she is named this way in some Russian variants of the charm type in question (Kliaus 1997, 298); besides, *Zaria* (or plural *Zori*, as three dawn deities are frequently addressed) taking away illnesses and curing is a very popular motif of the Slavic charms (Kliaus 1997, 46–7). The function of healing, attributed to the goddess of dawn in the East Slavic charms, fully corresponds to the mythical definition of the Lithuanian *Aušrinė*, according to which she patronises the sphere of health, beauty and youth. Therefore the Slavic charm about the Virgin Mary losing her keys, which has analogues in Lithuanian riddles, could be regarded as a manifestation of the same mythical theme.

There are other mythical motifs, realised in an analogical form in charms and riddles as well. For example, in Slavic charms, a motif of a strange bird with no wings sitting on a tree with no branches (description of illness) (Kliaus 1997, 79) is found; further on, the charmer kills that bird without a knife, cooks without a fire and eats without salt (Agapkina, Levkievskaja and Toporkov 2003, 161, no. 253). Quite a similar motif is present in one Lithuanian riddle:

A bird flew with no wings,
Perched on a tree with no branches,
A girl came without feet
And ate the bird without teeth. (Snow, earth, sun)⁸

⁸ “Atlėkė paukštis be sparnų,
Įsitūpė į medį be šakų,
Atėjo mergužėlė be kojų,
Suvalgė paukštį be dantų. (Sniegas, žemė, saulė)”
(Grigas 1968, 458, no. 5457).

This riddle is quite well known in Lithuania; it also extends far beyond the boundaries of the national repertoire, and represents a very widely spread international theme, variants of which are known not only in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine, but also in Norway, Denmark, Germany, Austria, Serbia, Hungary and elsewhere (Aarne 1920). Thus the same story performs two different naming functions: mythical in the riddle and magical in the charm. The wide dissemination of the riddle allows us to assume that this theme is very ancient in Baltic-Slavic folklore.

Among the texts characterised by mythical content, another charm aimed at facilitation of childbirth should be analysed here, along with its mythical context. The Baltic goddess Laima is the patron of childbirth, and she is supposed to help women in labour. This theme is amply manifested in Latvian folksongs in various motifs: childbirth is called Laima's sauna, the woman in labour asks for Laima's aid, sacrificing a hen to this goddess, Laima spreads a magical sheet for the woman, and so on (Arājs 1996, 242). Some folksongs describing child-bearing mention Laima carrying keys as well:

Where are you going, dear Laima,
With a handful of keys?
[Give] me the key, dear Laima,
That opens (the [gate] easily.⁹

This text is very close to a Latvian charm aimed at facilitating childbirth:

Mother, mother,
Give me your keys,
Let them open Mara's gate,
Let the sons and daughters come out!¹⁰

⁹ "Kur, Laimiņ, tu tecēsi,
Pilna sauja atslēdziņu?
Man, Laimiņ, to atslēgu,
Kura viegli atslēdza"
(Arājs 1996, 27, no. 23036, cf. 57, no. 23267).

¹⁰ "Māte, māte,
Dod man tavas atslēdziņas,
Lai atslēdza Māras vārtus,
Lai iznāca dēli, meitas" (Straubergs 1939, 394).

Māra replacing *Laima* in this charm is but a variation of the Blessed Virgin's name *Mary*,¹¹ which testifies to the syncretism of the Baltic religion and Christianity in the Latvian charms.

In both Belarusian and Russian childbearing charms, the main theme is also Holy Mary bringing keys for opening the woman's body at childbirth, as here:

Here comes God's Mother,
Lifting up her apron,
Carrying in this apron
The golden keys.
—Where do you go, God's Mother,
And with the golden keys?
—Here are the golden keys,
Open the gates
And let the child come into this world.¹²

As proved by comparison of Latvian and East Slavic charms, the motif describing a goddess opening the gates and letting out the baby is of pre-Christian origin, while the Virgin Mary (or some other Christian figure such as Eve, St. Peter or Christ, who also appear in a number of variants) may have replaced the ancient deities (just in the same manner as *svētā Māra*, “the Holy Mary”, frequently replaces the goddess *Laima* in Latvian charms).

¹¹ In Latvian folksongs, *Māra* is also mentioned as the patron of milk and livestock; this name is assumed to have influenced the name of the Virgin Mary in Latvian folksongs.

¹² “Идзе Божья Мацерь,
Хвартух подоткнутый,
А в том хвартухе
Золоты ключы.
—Куда идзешь, Божья Мацерь,
И с золотыми ключами?
—Наце вам золотые ключы,
Отмукайце ворота
И выпускайце бладенца на свет” (Bel.)
(Agapkina, Levkieskaia and Toporkov 2003, 30, no. 9, and no. 49; Kliaus 1997, 195–96).

The examples of charms presented above illustrate identical Baltic and Slavic mythical patterns, realised by the use of similar poetic means and therefore able to be considered as more or less close parallel themes, irrespective of the particular folklore genre manifesting them.

Zoological Elements

In order to represent the world of sicknesses, and to cure them, numerous zoological elements used to be employed; the illnesses are as often as not presented in the shape of animals or birds, and creatures from the animal world may assist in the curing process. Baltic and Slavic traditions use quite similar zoological elements, which are particularly evident in the comparative material of Lithuanian and Belarusian charms; certain typological parallels can be drawn from this material. Thus charms against a sty in the eye describe the sty as a wolf. One should repeat three times three times:

Wolf, wolf, get out of my eyes, I will give you a sack of money
and a sack of rye!¹³

When the eye is infected, somebody pulls the eyelid and even spits in the eye, saying this:

Wolf, wolf, get out.¹⁴

Charms against heartburn often employ the figure of a mare; against heartburn, one should say the following:

Heartburn was riding a grey mare. When the mare tripped, the
heartburn disappeared!¹⁵

One should repeat this thrice nine times without breathing in.

¹³ “Vilke, vilke, išlįsk iš akių, aš tau duosiu maišą pinigų ir maišą rugių!” (Lith.) (Vaitkevičienė 2005, no. 1003).

¹⁴ “Воўк, воўк, вылізь вон” (Bel.) (Sielicki 1986, 63, no. 2).

¹⁵ “Kartėlis jojo ant širmos kumelės. Kai kumelė parpuolė, ir kartėlis prapuolė!” (Lith.) (Vaitkevičienė 2005, no. 613).

The heartburn was riding a grey mare across a marsh, the mare fell down and the heartburn disappeared.¹⁶

The heartburn itself is imagined as a ravening creature, paralleled in Lithuanian charms by a wolf or raptorial fish. Moreover, in the following parallel between Lithuanian and Belarusian material, it is portrayed as devouring the mare's flesh; the two texts are characterised by a similar dialogic structure:

- Nameless, nameless,¹⁷ where have you been?
- Over the mountain.
- What were you doing?
- Chewing a head of a mare.
- Have you left anything for me?
- No, I forgot.
- Let God forget you!¹⁸

- Heartburn, heartburn, where have you been?
- Over the mountains, gnawing bones.
- So go back to the place you were.¹⁹

Among poultry, the hen is of special importance in folk medicine, especially when curing small babies. A particular ophthalmic disease, characterised by poor vision at dusk (that is, when hens have gone to roost)

¹⁶ “Пякота, пякота, ехала цераз балота на сівой кабыле. Кабыла ўпала і пякота прапала” (Bel.) (Bartashevich 1992, 366, no. 1271).

¹⁷ Heartburn is called “nameless”.

¹⁸ “– Bevardzi, bevardzi, kur buvai?

– Žu kalno

– Kų darei?

– Kumelės galvų kramčiau.

– O man ar palikai?

– Ne, pamiršau.

– Kad tavi Dievas pamirštų!” (Lith.)

(Vaitkevičienė 2005, no. 66).

¹⁹ “– Жога, жога, гдзе ты была?

– За гарамі косці гладала.

– Дак ідзі гдзе ты была” (Bel.)

(Bartashevich 1992, 363, no. 1254).

is closely related to hens; in Lithuanian it is called *vištakumas* “night blindness” (literally “hen’s sight”; cf. Bel. *куриная слепота*, “hen’s blindness”). The causes of this illness are attributed to hens: people are believed to start ailing when going to sleep at sunset, i.e. when hens go to roost. This disease is similarly cured in Lithuania and Belarus, i.e. by imitating the rooster’s flapping and crowing.

Before sunrise, after sunset, or in the morning before sunrise, the one suffering from “hen’s sight” should climb onto the fence and shout three times loudly:

Cock-a-doodle-doo, I will cry, whoever hears, let him have it [the disease].²⁰

When a boy was suffering from night blindness, his mother would wake him up early, before sunrise, and lead him to a gate or a fence. He would have to stand on the gate and beat his hands on his sides.

Lap lap lap! Cock-a-doodle-doo!²¹

After repeating this three times, the “hen’s sight” is cured (Vaitkevičienė 2005, no. 644).

Although this formula is laconic and not fully expanded, in the Lithuanian example only presenting an imitation of the rooster’s cry and flapping of wings, the identical details of performance nevertheless allow us to assume the common origins of these charms. Analogical types of the Lithuanian and Belarusian charms based on animals testify to the similar mythical notions of certain illnesses and to the ancient origins of these charms.

Bundles of Mythical Motifs

When comparing Baltic and Slavic charms, discussing typological equivalents is not enough; attention should also be paid to common

²⁰ “Кукарэку, заспяваю, хто пачуе, то таму” (Bel.) (Nikiforovskii 1897, 265).

²¹ “Lap lap lap! Kakariekū!” (Lith.)

motifs, which, although combined in the national repertoires in different ways, make up certain bundles of correlative motifs. Regardless of the virtual absence of precise textual equivalents, the existence of similar motifs indicates the presence of the same oral tradition. Here two cases of common motifs found in Baltic and Slavic charms will be analysed.

The motif of the *raven* is quite prominent in Latvian and East Slavic charms. Essentially, the story is as follows: the raven flies across the sea, carrying a needle and a thread (Bel., Rus.) / silk kerchief (Latv.) in its beak, and sews up / ties up the wound (skin to skin, vein to vein, bone to bone), as here:

The black raven flies in the air, takes a silk kerchief and ties up the drops of blood.²²

The raven flew across the sea, carrying a small needle and a silk thread for sewing up the wound and charming down the blood.²³

In the texts cited above the raven performs the magical function of *connection*: it sews up the wound and ties up the blood. This is the first common function of the raven in Latvian, Russian and Belarussian charms. Another function involves *transportation*: the raven carries away illnesses, pain and misfortunes, as in the following.

The thread broke off, and the blood stopped. One hundred smiths, one hundred hammers smashed down and shattered all pains and misfortunes. A raven came flying and carried away all the pains and misfortunes off to the sea and stuffed them down under a grey stone.²⁴

²² “Melnš krauklis skriej pa gaisiem, paņem zīda nēzdaudzīņu, sasien asins pilieniņus” (Latv.) (Straubergs 1939, 431).

²³ “Ляцуў воран чараз мора, нёс іголачку, шоўкаву нітачку рану зашываць і кроў замуўляць” (Bel.) (Bartashevich 1992, 158, no. 490).

²⁴ “Pārtrūka dzītiņa, aiztrūka asins. Simts kalēju, simts āmaru sasita, sapliekša visas sāpes, nelaimes. Atskrēja krauklis, aiznesa uz jūru visas sāpes, nelaimes palika zem pelēkā akmeņa” (Straubergs 1939, 431).

On the sea, on the bay, stands an oak with twelve branches, on these branches there are twelve nests, in those nests there are twelve ravens. Ravens, ravens! Fly down here to help this animal, take out the prickly heat and false hellebore poisoning [...] with your claws and wings, and smash them down, and carry them off to the blue sea, and let it across the blue sea, while you yourselves go onto the Latyr-stone [...].²⁵

A similar motif is represented in both the Latvian and the Belarussian texts: the raven carries the disease and pain off to the sea, and places it under/onto a white or grey stone. The image of the white stone in the sea is well known in Slavic and Baltic folklore; in Latvian and Lithuanian folksongs it is described as a mythical place where the Sun or God sleeps, from which the cosmic sea spreads out, and so on (Vaitkevičienė 2001, 146–9). In Slavic charms, this image is among the most important symbols of the world's centre.

On the other hand, the raven is able not only to carry away the negative things, but also to bring positive ones. This is particularly often made use of in charms aiming at increasing cows' milk, as here, for example:

The black raven flies over 9 seas and brings milk to my cows [as ample] as liver, and butter [as plentiful] as clay.²⁶

Magpies and crows, take the evil eyes and evil charms, and bring milk to this cow from all around.²⁷

²⁵ “[...] На моры, на лукамор’і стаіць дуб на дванаццаць какатоў, на тых какатах дванаццаць гняздоў, у тых гняздах дванаццаць вараноў. Вараны, вараны! Прылятайце к етай скаціні з помаччу, выдзірайця і выбівайця сваім крыллем і сваімі какцямі патніцу і чэмярыцу [...] і ўзнасіця на сіня мора, і пушчайця па сіняму мору, самі ўсхадзіця на Латыр-камень [...]” (Bartashevich 1992, 94, no. 228).

²⁶ “Melnais krauklis skrej pār 9 jūrām, pārnes manām gosniņām piena, kā aknu, sviestu kā mālus” (Latv.) (Straubergs 1939, 433).

²⁷ “Сарокі-варокі, вазміце прыстыкі і урокі, нясіце гэтай кароўцы з усих старон малокі” (Bel.) (Bartashevich 1992, 82, no. 187).

The third function performed by the raven is a magical one; it is itself conceived as a magical healer, able to charm the illness, while the raven's cawing is likened to uttering charms, as here:

Black raven, black feather, flies in the sky cawing: vein-to-vein, bone-to-bone! Veins, get tied together, bones, get knitted together, stay the way you were. (Charm against bone fracture.)²⁸

On the sea, on the ocean, there stands an oak, a black raven [sits] on this oak and charms the tooth, swollen, and burning, and aching [...].²⁹

The raven's healing skills are well known in legends and folktales, in which the raven is often among the most important personages: it knows where the vital water is hidden, and is capable of curing invalids and reviving the dead.

The three functions of the raven discussed above are realised in the Latvian and Belarusian charms by using very similar motifs, which form the common corpus of Baltic-Slavic motifs, although they are distributed in slightly different ways in different traditions. In spite of the absence of entirely analogical texts, characterised by an absolutely similar syntactic structure and mode of intonation, the correlation of the Latvian and Belarusian-Russian charms presented above seems obvious.

Another example is equally interesting, because it preserves vivid traces of Baltic-Slavic mythology: this example includes charms against snakes, elucidating the mythical notion of the reptilian world, the snake's place in the mythical hierarchy, the ethical attitude towards snakes (respect/hatred), and so on. In order to appreciate the charms against snakes, it is particularly difficult to discern typo-

²⁸ "Melnš krauklis, melna spalva, skrej pa padebesam kārktēdams: dzīslīņai pie dzīslīņai, kauļiņš pie kauļiņa! Dzīslīņas, saistaties, kauļiņi, vākaties; kā bijuši, tā stāpaties! (Lūzuma v.)" (Latv.) (Straubergs 1939, 432).

²⁹ "На моры, на кіяні стаіць дуб, на том дубу чорны воран, выгаваруець зуба цемяннога, і гаручага, і калючага [...]" (Bartashevich 1992, 191, no. 644, and 35, no. 8; cf. the raven charms the gun, *ibid.*, 35, no. 8; Kliaus 1997, 184 and 294).

logical parallels, because the structure of these charms is vastly different in the Baltic and Slavic traditions (most of the Slavic charms against snakes are “mythically centred” (Agapkina 2005, 247–91), while such a structure is hardly typical of the Lithuanian and Latvian charms). However, separate motifs are extremely close in both traditions, forming a common corpus of correlative motifs: a snake or the king/queen of the snakes (Lith. *gyvačių viešpats*, *gyvačių karalius* “lord of the snakes, king of the snakes”, Russ. and Bel. one snake or three snakes, called by the personal names of *Salamida*, *Skorpeya*, *Serafeya*, *Irina*, *Katerina*, *Tsaritsa Elitsa*, and others) can or have to take its/their venom back, the Sun, Moon and stars hate the snake, the Earth refuses to accept the snake that bit a human being, God (or other characters: Lith. *Perkūnas*, Latv. *Perkons* the thunder god, Bel., Russ. St. George, the Prophet Elijah, the Archangel Michael) strikes at the snake, and so on. By combining these motifs, two different viewpoints towards the snake can be discerned: 1) the snake is regarded as a mythical or even a divine being, which is addressed, sometimes by name, and implored to take its venom back; 2) the snake is regarded as a demonic being and threatened by summoning other authorities (*Perkūnas*, the Sun, Moon, Earth, and so on).

Both viewpoints are voiced in the Baltic-Slavic charms; however, in Lithuanian charms, the first viewpoint seems to predominate, while in the East Slavic and Latvian charms, it is the second.³⁰ In Lithuania, the snake (king of the snakes, or Earth) is often implored to take its venom back; the typical intonation of such charms is pleading, as here, for example:

The fiery king,
The lord of snakes,
Turn your eye
From under your crown:

³⁰ Zavialova 2006, 161. She has already noted this tendency along with a comparison of Lithuanian and Belarusian charms. According to her, attempts of the charmer to negotiate with a snake in Lithuanian charms reflect the cult of the snake.

King of the serpents,
Take away the stinger
From that poor thing!³¹

Conversely, in East Slavic charms, in spite of the very common mythical motif of a giant snake-queen and three snake sisters, a reverential and kind attitude towards snakes is much rarer. One such variant was published in the collection of Russian charms edited by L. N. Maikov:

On the sea, on the Ocean, on the island of Buyan, there stands an oak, beneath that oak grows a willow bush, under that bush there is a white stone lying, on that stone there is wool lying, under this wool the snake Skorpeya is lying. This snake has three sisters: Maria, Marina and Katerina. And we shall pray to you, bowing in all four directions: "Take away your spite from God's servant [personal name]!"³²

In Russian and Belarusian charms against snakes, the second viewpoint is especially prominent: snakes are regarded as demonic beings and threatened by summoning religious authorities. For example, we have the following:

[...] If you do not take out your snake fang, I will ask Archangel Michael, Archangel Michael will lash you from the skies with

³¹ "Karaliau liepsnotas,
Gyvačių viešpats,
Žvilgtelk akele
Po savo karūnėle:
Žalčių karaliau,
Atimk žandėlį
Nuo to (tos) vargdienėlio"
(Jucevičius, 1959).

³² "На море на Окиане, на острове на Буяне стоит дуб, под тем дубом раки-товый куст, под тем кустом лежит бел камень, на том камне лежит рунцо, под тем рунцом лежит змея скорпея. Есть у ней сестры Марья, Марина и Катерина. И мы вам помолимся, на все на четыре стороны поклонимся: 'Утишите свою лихость от раба Божия' [имя рек]" (Russ.) (Maikov 1994, 175).

thunder-lightning, with thunder he will kill you, with lightning he will burn you and he will scatter your ashes.³³

As often as not, the Prophet Elijah (who is commonly associated with thunder) may replace the Archangel Michael in this role. The saints function in the Belarusian charms as well, where, according to M. Zavialova, a fierce battle against the snake often takes place in the centre of the world (under the oak, on the stone, in the nest, and so on), possibly reflecting the myth of the thunder god's fight against the snake (Zavialova 2006, 163). Lithuanian and Latvian materials support this assumption, as here not only do Christian personages play their roles, armed with thunder and lightning, but also the thunder god *Perkūnas* / *Perkons* may function directly:

God will axe you, *Pērkons* will crash you with thunder, and lightning will burn you down. (A charm against snakebite.)³⁴

Oh water snake, black snake, spotted snake, flying snake, ground snake. Take back your bite, for if you don't—black sea, green oak, a thunder on the oak and if you don't take back your bite—it will split you into twelve pieces!³⁵

In Latvian folklore (particularly in folksongs) *Pērkons* is the main figure, eliminating the evil demons by force. In charms, he is depicted as fighting not only against snakes, but also against various illnesses, as in the following, for example:

Fly away as fast as you came, and if you resist, I shall cry to *Pērkons*, who will strike at you across the copper fence and will

³³ “[...] Если ты не вынешь свое змейное жало, то я попрошу Михаила Архангела. Михаил Архангел гром-молонию с неба спустит, громом тебя убьет, молнией сожгет и попелок твой разнесет” (Russ.) (Anikin 1998, 301, no. 1962).

³⁴ “Dievs tevi strāpēs, pērkons tevi nospers un zibsnis tavi sadedzinās. (Čūsķu vārdi)” (Latv.) (Straubergs 1939, 384).

³⁵ “Gyvate vandeninė, juodoji, margoji, skruoduola, žemine. Atlaisk geluonį, jei neatlaisi—juodas marias, žalias užuolas, un užuola griausmas, jei neatlaisi—tavi razmuš in dvylikų kavalkų!” (Lith.) (Vaitkevičienė 2005, no. 46).

beat you down right to the depths of the Earth. (Charm against rabies.)³⁶

Three times nine thunders coming from the sea, letting three times nine bullets kill that swelling under the stone, and this man becomes as healthy again as he was. (Charm against swelling.)³⁷

It could thus be concluded that the first paradigm, which includes addressing the snake and imploring it to take back its venom, represents the chthonic mythology and the cult of Earth, while the second one, in which the snake is threatened in the name of Thunder represents the celestial mythology. However, individual charms may also combine both these attitudes: the snake that has bitten may be regarded as a violator of the cosmic order and therefore guilty against both Heaven and Earth; consequently it can nowhere be accepted, unless it takes its venom back, as in these texts:

Oh snake, snake, do not bite cattle nor man: God will not have you, the Sun will not have you, the Moon will not have you, stars will not have you, you will find no shelter on moss or under, on the bush or under.³⁸

[...] If you do not give away your fang and spite, you will find no place under a bush, under leaves, under roots. The Sun and bright Moon will not shine for you and the wet mother-earth will not have you.³⁹

³⁶ “Skrej ārā tik ātri, kā tu ienāci; ja tiepsies, sauksu pārkonu, kas tevi spērs pār vara sētu un iespērs beidzot tais zemes dziļumos. (Trakuma vārdi.)” (Latv.) (Straubergs 1939, 386).

³⁷ “Trejdeviņi pārkoņi nāca no jūras, trejdevinas dzelzu lodes spēŗ pampumu apakš akmeņa; tas cilvēks paliek pie pirmās veselības. (Pampuma vārdi.)” (Latv.) (Straubergs 1939, 386).

³⁸ “Ak, tu gyvate, gyvate, nekāsk keltuvos nei žmogaus—nepriims tavęs Dievas, nepriims tavęs saulė, nepriims tavęs mėnuo, nepriims tavęs žvaigždės, nepriisiglausi tu nei an samanų, nei po samanom, nei ant krūmo, nei po krūmu” (Lith.) (Vaitkevičienė 2005, no. 764).

³⁹ “[...] Если не аддадзіце сваёй жаласьці і ярасьці, то не будзець вам сбудишча ні пад кустом, ні пад лістом, ні пад карнямі. Сонца і яркі месяц

As demonstrated by the latter examples, not only the separate motifs but also the syntactic structures are similar; therefore, a typological parallel may be revealed here. Existence of such parallels supports an assumption that common motifs, distributed across the Baltic and East Slavic charm repertoires, represent relics of the same themes and patterns. The more these variants are separated from each other, the more likely they are to testify to a lengthy process of existence and development. Therefore, whenever national repertoires are compared, it is important to analyse not only the types as semantic-syntactic analogues of units, but also the systems of motifs and images.

Religious-Ritual Formulas and Prayers

Ancient ritual formulas and prayers are a slightly different thing from charms proper; they are usually meant to express wishes or appeals addressed to pre-Christian deities. Although such prayers are closely connected with religion and, having lost their natural environment after the introduction of Christianity in Eastern Europe, they rapidly disappeared, nevertheless a number of such prayers, mostly related to daily life, agriculture and medicine, have been recorded in written sources and survived in the living tradition. Among such texts, a prayer to the new moon, well known in Lithuania and Belarus, should be noted.

Moon, Moon, the new Moon,
The bright young god of the sky!
Give him roundness, and health to me,
Give him fullness, and *Perkūnas*-kingdom to me!⁴⁰

не будучь вам свяціць і не будзець прынімаць вас сыра маць-земля” (Bel.) (Bartashevich 1992, 110, no. 297, cf. Maikov 1994, nos. 184–5).

⁴⁰ “Mėnuo, Mėnuo, Mėnulėli,
Dungaus šviesus dievaitėli!
Duok jam ratų, man sveikatų,
Duok jam pilnystį—man Perkūno karalystį!” (Lith.)
(Vaitkevičienė 2005, no. 507).

New Moon, young Moon,
Your circle is golden,
You should [become] round,
And I should be healthy.⁴¹

Such prayers addressing deities are rather few, and this one, directed at the new moon, is unique in terms of its wide spread: its variants have been recorded in Poland, Hungary, Estonia, Sweden and elsewhere.

Somewhat better chances for survival were granted to the formulas, which formed part of certain rituals: such formulas were preserved in folk customs for a very long time. In ethnographic recordings, the names of ancient gods have disappeared and been replaced by Christian saints. The prayer addressing fire presents a good example in this regard: its Lithuanian text recorded in the sixteenth century addresses the fire goddess *Gabija*, while its Latvian and Belarusian parallels contain names of the Christian saints St. Laurence and St. Agatha, protectors from fire. In Lithuanian and Latvian traditions, this prayer was uttered when the harvested crops were brought into sheds to dry in the autumn. As summer is short and there is no time to dry the harvested crop properly, the work is completed in the sheds by using fire. Then they have to pray to the goddess *Gabija* (*Gabia*) in the following words:

Gabia, goddess, raise the heat, lower the sparks.⁴²

Help us, Laurence,
To thresh the barn [of grain],
Raise the smoke,
Lower the sparks.⁴³

⁴¹ “Маладзік маладой,
Твой круг залатой.
Табе на прыбытак.

А мне на здароўя” (Bel.)

(recorded by T. Valodzina and I. Gurskaia from M. S. Batura, born in 1927 in Vautsha village, Dokshitsy region, Belarus).

⁴² “Gabiė deuaite, pokiėlki garu, nuleiski kibixstu” (Lith.) (Vėlius 2001, 597).

⁴³ “Palīdzi, Labrenci,

Rijīņu kult,

Cel augstu dūmīņus,

Zemu dzirkstelītes” (Latv.) (Straubergs 1939, 360).

Saint Agatha,
 Do not be rich,
 Do not rise up,
 Do not spread wide,
 Go low,
 Spread narrow. (Against fire.)⁴⁴

The Belarusian charm has a very close Polish parallel (Agapkina, Levkievskaia and Toporkov 2003, 411) and is somewhat more distanced from the Lithuanian and Latvian formulas; nevertheless, the structures of all the texts cited above are based on the same principle. As comparison with the Lithuanian text clearly proves, this prayer-appeal is of pre-Christian origin, and St. Laurence or St. Agatha has replaced the ancient Baltic and Slavic deities here. Such syncretism is typical also of the Lithuanian prayers to fire, which usually address the fire goddess *Gabijsa*, but she also sometimes (although rather seldom) may be replaced by St. Agatha (Balys 1951, nos. 278–329).

Similar cases of religious syncretism could be noted in the charms aimed at facilitation of childbirth: in the Slavic variants of these charms, the Virgin Mary or Eve is addressed, while in Latvian charms and folksongs, *Laima* (the goddess of childbirth), *Māra* and *svēta Marīja* may be used interchangeably. Incidentally, this particular charm could also be regarded as a religious-ritual formula because of its form of direct address, although in Slavic variants the direct dialogue tends to be incorporated into a popular motif of Christian charms: God meets Mary and asks where she is going, and she answers that she is going to some particular place to aid a certain woman, and so on.

Comparative studies of the Baltic and Slavic pre-Christian prayers have hardly yet begun; more detailed investigation would probably reveal other parallels as well.

⁴⁴ “Святы Агата,
 Ны живы богаты,
 Ны иды високо,
 Нэ займай шыроко,
 Идэ нызанько,
 Займай вузанько. (От пожара)” queries in the footnote:
 (Agapkina, Levkievskaia and Toporkov 2003, 411, no. 733).

Functional Formulas in the Healing Charms

Charm formulas that are uttered at the same time as the performance of certain actions, and have contents directly related to the immediate situation of the action, are regarded as *functional formulas* here. Such formulas are almost never used separated from the action. Probably the best-known example is presented in this dialogue:

- What are you eating?
- *Grizius* (pain).
- Then go on, eat it out.⁴⁵

- What are you eating?
- *Džerste* (pain).
- Then go on, eat it out.⁴⁶

- What are you chewing?
- I am chewing the pain.
- Eat it more strongly, so that the pain goes away.⁴⁷

Because of the synchronisation of word and action, the contents of such charms may only slightly vary, while new variants may appear along with altered magical actions: for example, when cutting with an axe, one is asked what is being cut, or when sweeping one is asked what is being swept out, and so on.

⁴⁵ “– Kų krimci?
– Grizių.
– Krimsk, krimsk, kad iškrimstum!” (Lith.)
(Vaitkevičienė 2005, no. 571).

⁴⁶ “– Ko tur kodi?
– Džerksti!
– Kodi, kodi, kamēr izkodi” (Latv.)
(Straubergs 1939, 247).

⁴⁷ “– Што ты грызеш?
– Я грызь грызу.
– Грызі болей, каб не балела” (Bel.)
(Bartashevich 1992, 230, no. 777).

Such functional formulas, characterised by a high level of structural stability, should be regarded as an archaic part of the charm heritage. We may add another two Baltic-Slavic charm equivalents: against the evil eye, one should wipe the child's eyes with one's hem, saying the following:

Through where I gave birth, there I chase it!⁴⁸

The way a mother gave birth, may it [the illness] go away the same way. (Against epilepsy.)⁴⁹

When one sees two people riding one horse, one rubs on a wart with a finger or sand and throws it after the riders, saying the following:

There go two of you riding, take my warts as the third with you!⁵⁰

Brothers, brothers! Take my warts!⁵¹

Twins, twins, take my warts.⁵²

In the second case, the full synchronisation of the speaker's action and the text is not necessary (sand is not always thrown), but the situation itself has to be standard nevertheless, because the formula is uttered only when seeing somebody riding double.

The list of such formulas may be extended further. For example, the following types of the Lithuanian charms also have Slavic parallels: "Salt into the eyes, firebrand into the teeth" (against evil eyes and witchcraft, salt is used for charming); "Are you buying? I am!" (by imitating the commercial transaction, the illness is "sold" to another

⁴⁸ "Per kur gimdiau, tį ir nuvarau" (Lith.) (Balkutė 2004).

⁴⁹ "Чим матиць родила, шоб так и отходила" (Bel.) (Agapkina, Levkievskaia and Toporkov 2003, 264, no. 456).

⁵⁰ "Jojata dviese, priimkit mano karpas trečias!" (Lith.) (Vaitkevičienė 2005, no. 522).

⁵¹ "Братки, братки! Заберыце наши бородавки!" (Bel.) (Agapkina, Levkievskaia and Toporkov 2003, 209, no. 342).

⁵² "Dwojaki, dwojaki, weźcie ode mnie brodawki" (Pol.) (Tolstoi 1995, vol. 1, 235).

person); “I am rubbing herpes with my ring-finger” (along with rubbing with a ring-finger, which in Lithuanian and Russian is called “nameless finger”, the illness is wished to disappear without a sign); “Here, I cut the bond” (in order to cure a child that cannot walk, the ground beneath its feet is cut with a knife) (Vaitkevičienė 2005, nos. 22–32, 118–24 and 954). Although at first sight such formulas may seem like simple naming of actions, they actually present certain relics of the cultural and magical tradition, and the areas of their dissemination are defined as results of genetic or cultural connections.

Conclusions

In conclusion, it may be stated that most of the above-mentioned Baltic and Slavic charm parallels can be considered as survivals of a common tradition. Their affinity is manifested on several levels: of types, motifs and even individual images. The probability of an ancient tradition is especially high in those cases when analogues have spread across wide areas or can even be found in the national repertoires of other peoples. As often as not these motifs or themes tend to go beyond the boundaries of the charm genre and can be found in riddles, folksongs or other kinds of folklore.

Moreover, a somewhat more pronounced level of correlation between the Baltic and Belarusian charms can also be discerned (for example, charms against a sty in the eye, heartburn or night blindness). Further investigations of these parallels should enable us either to prove or to disprove an assumption that they are manifestations of Belarusian and Baltic genetic, territorial or historical affinity.

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CHAPTER X

The *Năjit* Between Prayers and Charms: A Study of the Romanian Manuscript Tradition¹

Emanuela Timotin

This study focuses on charms that are intended to treat a disease named *năjit* in Romanian, and more particularly a version of such charms illustrated by six texts preserved in manuscripts of the Romanian Academy Library in Bucharest. The analysis places particular importance on the textual motifs and, subsequently, on their preservation or rearrangement through the manuscript transmission, on the prototype of the Romanian version and on the relation between the particular characteristics of these writings and the milieu in which they were employed.

1. In contemporary Romanian, the polysemous word *năjit* is used mainly in popular language. Its principal meaning is that of disease, which can be a specific one; that is, *earache*, *gingivitis* or *toothache*,² or a general one, since the term is also described as the “name generically given to neuralgias, to toothaches, to inflammations of the ears, etc.” (see *Dicționarul* 1971, s.v. *năjit*).³ The word is also employed in veterinary medicine as a disease manifested by the eruption of some boils

¹ This article was submitted for publication in 2007, November. For more recent research about the Romanian charms against *năjit*, see Timotin 2010, 43–64 and 249–60.

² I.-A. Candrea was the first scholar who drew attention to these regional meanings of the word, however without claiming that his remarks were representative for all the Romanian regions.

³ It is the explanation given in the most important dictionary of the Romanian language.

on the skin of sheep, by the inflammation of the udder or of the leg of sheep or of cows, and it also belongs to magical terminology, designating the demon that inflicts the diseases described above, and to traditional botanical vocabulary, as the popular denomination of *Asarum europaeum* (ibid.).

By carefully identifying the organs that the demon had afflicted in the patient, the Romanian traditional charms collected since the closing decades of the nineteenth century emphasise the intimate connection between the *năjit*, depicted as a malefic demon, and the homonymous disease that affects human beings; these organs are most frequently related to the sick person's head.⁴

The difficulty in specifying the human ailment to which the Romanian word refers derives on the one hand from its controversial etymology, since the *năjit* was related both to a single etymon of Slavic origin⁵ and to multiple etymons,⁶ and on the other from the polysemous character of the equivalent Slavic words, which could designate a malady of the teeth, or of the gums, a *meningitis purulenta*, a headache,⁷ an infection of the mammary glands (this meaning is attested in Man-

⁴ The charms in question often have the form of an exhortation of the demon, which is gradually chased out of the patient's brain, ears, cheeks, eyes, nose, gums or teeth; see, for example, Tocilescu-Țapu 1971, 255; Teodorescu 1982, 446; Hasdeu 2002, 114.

⁵ In this regard the etymon was considered to be Bulgarian (see *Dicționarul* 1971, s.v.; Purdela Sitaru 1999, 62), Czech (see Șăineanu 1922, s.v.) or Serbian (see Candrea and Adamescu 1931, s.v.).

⁶ In this case, the lexicographers proceeded from the Old Slavonic term and insisted on its diffusion and its various meanings in the Slavic languages. Thus Cihac adopted Miklosich's explanation of the Old Slavonic word (see Miklosich 1862–5, s.v. *nežit*, “quid sit ignoratur”; cfr. Old Sl. *žitī* “vita”, *nežitīnŭ* “non vitalis”, “injucundus”) and related the Romanian word to its Czech and Polish equivalents (see Cihac 1879, s.v.); H. Tiktin referred to the Czech, Ukrainian and Polish terms (see Tiktin 1895, s.v.); Scriban took into account both the Old Slavonic word and the Ukrainian, Polish and Czech terms (see Scriban 1939, s.v.); Ciorănescu accepted Cihac's suggestion, but noted that the term also appeared in Serbian and Czech (see Ciorănescu 2002, s.v.), while Mihăescu spoke of the Bulgarian, Serbo-Croatian and Ukrainian words (see Mihăescu 2005, s.v. *balina*).

⁷ For the opinions as to the meanings of the Slavic terms, see Atanassova 2003, 187, n. 1. For diachronic research, see Dukova 1984, 31–3.

sikka 1909, 50), or, generally, a disease that deprives a human being of his or her vital force.⁸

2. It should be pointed out that studies of the Romanian meanings of the term *năjit* have not taken into account the most ancient testimonies about it.

The Romanian translation of the *Index of banned books* completed by Staicu, scribe of the Princely Church of Târgoviște in 1667–1669, records very important information about the disease: the chapter *The lying writings that faithful Christians should not have* mentions the practice of curing the *năjit* by means of *molitve*, “prayers, exorcisms” that the church considered heretical, thereby suggesting that the writings in question could easily pass for religious canonical texts:

In the holy text there are also other lying writings, written by the heretics for the misfortune of the ignorant, within which there are [...] false prayers against fever, *năjit* and other diseases.⁹

The Romanian manuscripts preserve four versions of charms that were intended to cure the *năjit*.¹⁰ The oldest one is represented by a single text, named *Rugă cându doare capul* (Prayer for the headache), which comprises a slightly modified Biblical pericope, followed by several lines of a *historiola*.¹¹ Another version, also illustrated by a unique text, entitled *Descântec de năjit* (*Charm against năjit*), is composed of an epic fragment and a conjuration by which the demon *năjit*, which

⁸ In the Romanian scholarship, this explanation, based on the analysis of the components of the word (the negative prefix *ne* + radical *žit* “to live”), was supported, apart from Cihac, by Bishop Melchisedec and by a historian of medicine; see Melchisedec 1884, 383, n. 3; Vătămanu 1970, 125–6.

⁹ “Sânt iar ș-alte între dumnezeiasca scriptură scripturi minciunoase de eretici scrise spre pacoste neștiuților în care sânt [...] molitve minciunoase de friguri și de năjituri și de nevoi.” (For the entire Romanian text, see Mareș 2005, 276–9.) The index was first edited in Cartoian 1929, 267–71.

¹⁰ For the compositional particularities of these versions, see Timotin 2007, 49–64.

¹¹ The charm, written in the margin of a sixteenth-century Slavonic manuscript of Ukrainian origin (Bucharest, Romanian Academy Library, MS 418, fols 380^v–2^v), was first published in Panaitescu 2003, 233. I have given a new revised edition in Timotin 2006, 75.

has attacked domestic animals, is chased away.¹² The most recent version includes four texts, always named *descânțete* (charms, incantations) and is organised as a conjuration of the malefic demon, which is ordered to leave the organs of the patient's head.¹³

The version that I deal with here is represented by six texts; they were written between the second half of the eighteenth century and 1829, and are preserved in the Romanian Academy Library in Bucharest.¹⁴

The different designations of the charms suggest their connection either to magic or to religious literature. One single text must obviously be included in the category of magical curative writings, as evidenced by its title of *descânțec* (charm, incantation),¹⁵ while three are designated as *molitvă* (prayer, exorcism).¹⁶ Two texts are untitled (MS 1335, 2182), but in the case of MS 1335 the omission is due to the fragmentary character of the writing. However, some extra-textual details indicate that it was also named *molitvă*: its scribe wrote *molitve* (prayers, exorcisms) on the upper side of the folios where he had transcribed the charm against the *năjit* and, in a personal note that he added after writing his entire collection of texts, he presented them as *molitve*.¹⁷

¹² This eighteenth-century charm (Bucharest, Romanian Academy Library, MS 3944, fols 112v–3r) was edited in Timotin 2007, xxiv.

¹³ The texts, the most important feature of which is their similarity to traditional charms, were written in the nineteenth century, after 1825–1826. One of them was published in Melchisedec 1884. I have published three other texts (Bucharest, Romanian Academy Library, MS 5706, fol. 116v; MS 2980, fol. 14r; MS 1223, fols 24r–v); see Timotin 2006, xx–xxiii.

¹⁴ In MS 1507 (fols 65v–6r), 1320 (fols 20v), 3275 (fols 71r–1v), 4083 (fols 25v–6v), 2182 (fols 31v–2r) and 1335 (fol. 2r). I have edited the charms of MS 1507, 1320, 2182 and 1335 in Timotin 2006, 75–9. All the texts are edited in Timotin 2007, xiii–xix.

¹⁵ *Dăscânțecul dă năjât* (MS 1320). At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Prince Cantemir would clearly define the *descânțec* as a curative charm: “incantamenti genus, quo cunctos morbos, qui non sint lethiferi, sanari posse autumant”; see Cantemir 2006, 334.

¹⁶ *Molitvă pentru năjit* (MS 1507), *Molitva pentru năjit* (MS 3275), *Molitfă de năjât* (MS 4083).

¹⁷ For this note, see Ștrempel 1978, 297. In the description of the manuscript, the text, unidentified, is integrated in a large group of writings, *Molitve și rugăciuni* (*Exorcisms and prayers*): see *ibid.*; cf. Ștrempel, Moisil and Stoianovici 1967, 576.

The text entitled *descântec* is copied in a collection of medical recipes and charms (MS 1320, fols 20^r–22^v) written in the second half of the eighteenth century, and it is followed by two other charms: *Dăscântec dă mursecătură dă lup* (Charm against wolf bite) and *Dăscântec dă șarpe* (Charm against a snake).¹⁸ The composition of the miscellany, which also contains private domestic notes, a story, and the list of the princes of Wallachia, shows that the scribe, who was a layman with an important function at the princely court, was interested in having a codex for domestic use.¹⁹

All the other texts, except for the one recorded in MS 3275, are included in exorcism collections of various sizes, always close to non-canonical prayers against the evil eye.²⁰ Analysis of the composition of manuscripts shows that their frequent designation as *molitve* is far from fortuitous.

MS 1507, copied by an unknown scribe in the second half of the eighteenth century, comprises two types of writings: the texts of a divine service in honour of the Blessed Virgin (Fols 1^r–29^v) and a large group of prayers with an explicit practical purpose (fols 30^r–69^v),²¹ which were to be performed by a priest and which dealt either with the clerical activities, or with the possible misfortunes of parishioners.²²

¹⁸ The charm against a snake is edited in Timotin 2006, lxxxvi.

¹⁹ The text was not identified in Ștrempel's description of the manuscript and it was considered to form part of a larger category of *Rețete medicale și descânțete* (Medical recipes and charms); see Ștrempel 1978, 201–2.

²⁰ In MS 3275, the two writings do not appear in immediate succession. I consider the prayers against the evil eye to be uncanonical because, despite their composition, based on the invocations of various saints and on the evocation of episodes of the Old Testament, they do not appear in the printed *Molitvenice* (Euchologia) of the time. My assertion is based on the research of euchologia printed between the sixteenth and the eighteenth century in Snagov, Buzău, Râmnic, Târgoviște, Bucharest or Iași.

²¹ Ștrempel does not offer a detailed description of these texts, which are comprehensibly presented as *Molitve și rugăciuni* (Exorcisms and prayers); see Ștrempel 1978, 353.

²² While a few texts refer strictly to the sacerdotal obligations and describe certain divine services, most of them (*Prayer at the foundation of a house*; *Prayer at the profaned vessel*; *Prayer for one who cannot sleep* etc.) echo the laity's needs. Among these, only the prayers against the evil eye, erysipelas and the *năjit* do not appear in the printed *euchologia* of the time. Here they

The presence of numerous texts of divine services, where the parts of the priests and of the deacons are clearly defined, indicates that the codex was copied and used by a clergyman.

The contents of the miscellany copied by the deacon Ioniță, the scribe of MS 3275 in 1799, demonstrate his concern with collecting writings from various domains. The texts that he chose to set down are apocryphal (*The Legend of Adam's Head*), eschatological (*The Apocalypse of the Virgin Mary*; *The Vision of Macarios*; *Sermon on the Resurrection of the Dead*), edifying (*Moral Stories*; *Against Haughtiness*) or utilitarian (*Sermon for Marriage*; *For the Holy Icons, What to Do When They Are Very Deteriorated*; *Prayer for the Field*; *Prayer against the Evil Eye*), and so on.²³ The presence of numerous utilitarian texts, some of which far exceed what would be needed for private use, suggests that their owner aimed at possessing a manuscript that he could employ in various situations. Under the circumstances, it is plausible to suppose that the prayer against *năjit* might have been used by the deacon both for personal needs and at the request of people of his parish.

It seems that the text against *năjit* recorded in the MS 4083 also belonged to a clergyman, because it forms part of a small exorcism collection, together with a prayer against the evil eye and a prayer against spells, that was attached to a printed *euchologion*.²⁴

The social status of the scribe of MS 1335, who had an important administrative function in the princely school in Bucharest, provides no evidence to help us decide whether he was a clergyman or a layman. However, since the texts that he wrote conclude with the typical final formula of a prayer pronounced by a priest, it is highly possible that the charm against *năjit* recorded in this manuscript was also employed in the clerical milieu.

The charm of MS 2183 was recorded by Todorachi, a specialised scribe (*logofăt*), who would carefully note the date when he copied

are found in the final part of the manuscript and are followed only by the *Service at the place or at the house disturbed by witchcraft or spells*.

²³ For a complete description of this manuscript, see Ștrempel 1987, 69.

²⁴ It is impossible to describe the composition of the printed *euchologion*, because it was detached from the manuscript exorcism collection when the codex was inventoried in the Library; for the marginal notes that record the previous use of the manuscript, see *ibid.*, 324–5.

each text in his miscellany. This meticulousness suggests the following remarks: on the one hand, the transcription of the text against *năjit* and of a prayer against the evil eye on the same day, August 20, 1812, and the independent position of this newly created exorcism collection within the miscellany indicate that the two writings must also have been recorded together in the source used by Todorachi, and show once again to what extent these two curative prayers go hand in hand in the manuscript transmission; on the other hand, the frequent dates, marking various years, indicate the scribe's interest in completing an extremely rich miscellany that could provide him with vast material with which to satisfy his clients' demands.

3. All these six charms against *năjit* have the form of a *historiola*, presenting the encounter between Christ, who descends from above, and the *năjit*, which rises out of the dried [sic] sea. After a detailed description of the following demonic actions, Christ casts the *năjit* into the uninhabited woods and into the horns of stags and of rams. The texts conclude with another conjuration in the name of the Holy Trinity:

Christ came from the seventh heaven and his food²⁵ had been ready and the *năjit* had come out of the dried²⁶ sea and Jesus met him and said to him: "Where are you going, *năjit*?"

"I am going, my Lord, into the man's head, to putrefy his brain and to spill his blood, and to dry up his life and to twist his teeth

²⁵ The detail of the food is a *locum obscurum*; it is possible to treat it either as a meaning of the Romanian word *hrana*, "food", that is not attested in the dictionaries, or as a misunderstanding of the original Slavonic text due to the Romanian translator. The passage, which is absent in the fragmentary version of MS 1335, appears in three other texts, with slight modifications: "fu gata hrana lui" (and his food was ready) (MS 1320, fol. 20^v); "fuseră gătite toate cele pentru hrana lui" (everything for his food had been ready) (MS 2182, fol. 31^v); "fu gata hrana" (and the food was ready) (MS 3275, fol. 71^r). The scribe of MS 4083 transformed the paragraph, probably because he had found it meaningless: "Vinind Isus din al șaptelea cer și fu gata a ne ruga milii lui" (Jesus came from the seventh heaven and [everything] was ready for us to pray for his mercy): MS 4083, fol. 25^v.

²⁶ The Romanian word *uscată* can be translated both as "dried" and as "dry"; the other texts of the version do not offer any supplementary information that might help to choose one of the two possibilities.

and to distort his mouth and to remove his jaws and to blind his eyes and to deafen his ears and to block up his nostrils, and to provoke headaches in him day and night.”

And Christ said to him: “Get back, *năjit*, and go into the deserted forests and go into the horns of the stags and of the rams and stay there till the sky and the earth pass away. Fear the Lord who sits on the Judgement throne of the entire world and may this serve you as an order, beginning of the beginnings and of all the diseases,²⁷ and get out of the servant of God (name), of his head, of his nostrils, of the crown of his head, of his eyes, of his teeth, of his ears and of all his joints. May you fly, *năjit*, from the heavens without eyes, and may you see yourself walking with no feet and catching with no hands, and stabbing with no knife, and eating with no mouth. Be broken, *năjit*, as the foam on the sea, as the wind through the clouds, as the dust on the earth, in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, amen. I conjure you, *năjit*, not to enter the Lord’s servant (name), but to get out of him soon, because Christ God chases you, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, now and for ever, amen.”²⁸

²⁷ The passage is quite obscure; it also appears in three other texts, in a modified form: “Ție aceasta îți zic, *năjite*, începătura începăturilor și a tuturor boalelor” (I am saying this to you, *năjit*, the beginning of all the beginnings of all the diseases): MS 3275, fol. 71^v; “Și iată că-ți poruncesc ție, *năjitule*, rădăcina tuturor răutăților și a tuturor boalelor” (And now I am ordering you, *năjit*, the root of all the misdeeds and of all the diseases): MS 2182, fol. 31^v; “Îți poruncesc, *năjite*, începătura tuturor răutăților și a boalelor” (I am ordering you, *năjit*, the beginning of all the misdeeds and of all the diseases): MS 4083, fol. 26^r.

²⁸ “Viind Isus de la al șaptelea ceriuri și fuse gata hrana lui și fuse și năjătul işind din mare uscată și l-au întâlnit pre el Isus și i-au zis lui: ‘Unde mergi, năjâte?’

‘Mergu, Doamne, în capul omului, să-i împut creierii și să-i vărs sângele și să-i usuc viața și să-i zmintesc dinții și să-i strâmbez gura și să-i strămut fălcile și să-i orbesc ochii și să-i asurzesc urechile și să-i astup nările și să-i fac dureri în cap și zioa și noaptea.’

Și-i zise Isus lui: ‘Întoarce-te, nejâte, și te du în codrii pustii și să întri în coarnele cerbilor și ale berbecilor și să fii acolo până va trece cerul și pământul. Teme-te de Domnul cela ce șade pre scaunul de judecată a toată lumea și să-ți fie ție aceasta începătură începăturilor și a tuturor boalelor, și

Although the version is very consistent from the point of view of its composition, the texts present several distinctive characteristics.

The charm recorded in MS 1320 is the shortest, and it expounds only the main structure of the *historiola*. It presents the two protagonists: Christ, coming from the sky, and the demon *năjit*, emerging from the dried sea; it enumerates the patient's bodily parts that the demon was to affect, which are all related to the patient's head; it stipulates the banishment performed by Christ, and the final conjuration.

The specific characteristics of the other four charms (MS 3275, 2182, 1335 and 4083) seem to proceed from the scribes' concern with clarifying and normalising the texts that they were transcribing in accordance with the canon of religious literature.

The succession of *adynata* may have been judged incomprehensible and thus superfluous by most of the scribes,²⁹ and it is reworked so far as to become a description of the divine punishment inflicted on the demon, which, consequently, is made to have no feet (Ms 4083, 2182 and 1335) or hands (Ms 4083 and 1335) anymore, and which is to stab itself (Ms 4083).

Some texts support the existence of a strong connection between the *năjit* and the Devil by developing an invocation of Christ, who is asked to banish "the Devil and the *năjit*" (MS 3275, 2182 and 1335);

ieși din robul lui Dumnezeu (cutare) din cap, din nări, din creștet, din ochi, din dinți, din urechi, din mâsele și din toate închieturile. Să zbori, năjate, din ceriu fără de ochi și să te vezi fără de picioare umblând și fără de mâini prinzând și fără de cuțit junghind și fără de gură mâncând. Eu te jur pă tine, neajate, ca să nu mai întri în robul lui Dumnezeu (cutare), ce curând să ieși de la dânsul, că te gonește Hristos Dumnezeu, în numele Tatălui și al Fiului și a Sfântului Duh, acum și pururea și în vecii vecilor, amin."

I am using the text of MS 1507, which is one of the most ancient charms illustrating this version.

²⁹ Apart from MS 1507, this succession of *adynata* is preserved without any modification only in the charm of MS 3275. The scribes may have rewritten it not only because they intended to remove any magical topos from their texts, but also because it may have been totally unknown to them, since it scarcely appears in the Romanian charms: in the manuscript charms, it is also attested in an incantation against erysipelas (Bucharest, Romanian Academy Library, MS 5024, fol. 4^r), edited in Timotin, 2007, lix, while in the oral magic literature it is specific to the curative charms for the uterus; see Candrea 1999, 375–6.

the identification between them is complete when, according to another charm, Christ is called on to cast away “the Devil *năjit*” (MS 4083). Parallel to the identification of the Devil with the *năjit*, the texts amplify, especially in the last part, the number of the patient’s protectors: Christ and the Holy Trinity are joined by the Virgin Mary (MS 4083, 2182 and 1335), the celestial (MS 4083 and 2182) and angelic (MS 4083) powers, and the cross (MS 1335).

4. This Romanian version of the charms against the *năjit* can be related to the long and rich Slavonic manuscript tradition of charms that are intended to cure the same disease and more particularly to the texts that display a similar *historiola*. The model is demonstrated in one of the most ancient Slavonic charms against the *năjit*, a lead amulet dating to the tenth or eleventh century, which recounts how the *năjit*, just risen from the Red Sea, meets Christ and tells him that he will go to a man to suck out his brains, to spill his blood and to break his ribs. Finally, Christ casts the demon into the wilderness and into the heads of stags.³⁰

The Romanian texts of this version are much closer to the following charm published by Pypin and Spasovic, found in a Serbian manuscript:³¹

Le Nežit sortait de la mer sèche et Jésus venait du ciel. Jésus lui dit: “Où vas-tu, Nežit?” Le Nežit lui répondit: “C’est ici que je vais, dans la tête de l’homme, dessécher sa cervelle, rompre son crâne, faire tomber ses dents, déformer sa nuque, rendre sourdes ses oreilles, aveugles ses yeux et son nez sans odorat, épuiser son sang, brûler ses paupières, tordre sa bouche, paralyser ses membres, porter la mort dans ses veines, ruiner son corps, détruire sa beauté et le torturer comme un démon.” Et Jésus lui

³⁰ Doncheva and Popkonstantinov 1994, 288–92. I have developed the comparison between this Slavonic text and the Romanian texts in Timotin 2006, 81.

³¹ The editors did not date the text, but they considered it to be quite old, because it was written on parchment; see Pypin and Spasovic 1881, 121. For other manuscript texts against *năjit*, see Miltenova and Kirilova 1994, 114; Hristova 2001, 125–26; Atanassova 2003, 190–1; Buslaev 2006, 110–11.

dit: “Retourne-t-en, Nežit, va-t-en sur une montagne déserte, et dans la solitude, tu trouveras là une tête de cerf, tu pourras t’y établir” (For the entire text, see Pypin et Spasovic 1881, 121).

The long description of the possible demonic attacks reveals that both in the Romanian and in the Slavonic charms the *năjit* is mainly inclined to afflict the patient’s head or each part of the patient’s head, which are all carefully enumerated: teeth, ears, mouth, nostrils, jaws, eyes, and so on. Although the last part of the depiction of the malefic acts indicates the patient’s veins or blood as possible targets, the *năjit* seems highly connected to the patient’s head, which associates the magical disease with a sort of headache or migraine. This interpretation reconciles the multiple meanings of the word: the *năjit*, viewed as a magical disease, covers a large semantic area, where it can acquire either a general meaning (headache, migraine) or more particular meanings corresponding to the disorder of each organ of the head (rhinitis, stomatitis, otitis, and so on).

The identification of the *năjit* with a headache or migraine, as it emerges from the analysis of this version of Romanian charms against *năjit* and of its Slavonic model, draws these texts closer to the Greek prayers against migraine that present a quasi-identical *historiola*: the migraine (ἡμικρανὸν or πονοκεφάλια) comes out of the sea, “rioting and roaring”, and meets Christ, who describes the possible malefic attacks, while addressing the demon:

“Where are you going, O headache and migraine and pain in the skull and in the eyes and inflammation and tears and leukoma and dizziness?”³²

Finally, Christ prevents the evil spirit from settling in the man’s head; he chases the migraine into the head of a bull.

The Greek texts have been analysed so far not only with regard to their variations along the manuscript transmission (see Barb 1966, 2–4; Kotansky 1994, 6–4; Spier 2006, 30–1), but also with regard

³² The text was edited in Pradel 1907, 267–8. I am using Kotansky’s translation: see Kotansky 1994, 61. For a version of a Greek charm against migraine, see Abbot 1903, 362–4.

to the Antique prototype that they develop. The researchers' unanimous opinion is that they represent the Christian survival of an ancient belief, as attested in an amulet discovered at Carnuntum. The fragmentary amulet, assigned to the first or second century (see Kotansky 1994, 59), is based on the same narrative scenario. This time, the feminine demon of the migraine is named Antaura, and since this denomination can be explained as a compound of the prefix *αντί* and the noun *αύρα*,³³ Antaura, the demoness emerging from the sea, was related to an "opposing"³⁴ light wind.³⁵ The powerful deity, who impedes the demonic actions, is Artemis of Ephesos, a divinity well known for her magical powers³⁶ and for her influence in the Mediterranean world (see Fleischer 1973, especially 1–137).

For the Half-Head [Migraine]: Antaura came out of the sea. She shouted like a hind. She cried out like a cow. Artemis of Ephesos met her (saying):

³³ For this interpretation, generally accepted by the specialists, see Reitzenstein 1926, 177; Barb 1966, 3; Kotansky 1994, 65.

³⁴ This shade of meaning originates from the negative significance of the prefix; see Zingerle 1929, 136; Barb 1966 3.

³⁵ Consequently, Antaura was related both to other malefic wind spirits, and to the malefic spirit aura or abra, mentioned in an exorcism attributed to Saint Gregory, where the demon is also connected to the abyss and to water; see Jansiewitsch 1910, 627; Weinreich 1927, 224; for the description of the exorcism, see Arnaud 1913, 292–304. For the meaning of the word *aura*, see recently Deschard 2003, 1–22, where, on the basis of the analysis of the most ancient Greek utilisations of the term, the author concludes that Aura—a humid exhalation related to the aurora, originating from the water of seas or of rivers—associates the ideas of substance and motion. The problem of the origin of the demoness's name is still controversial: Barb first considered it "obviously Neoplatonic", without supporting his assertion (see Barb 1963, 121), and then he rejected any popular etiology (see Barb 1966, 3); cf. Kotansky 1994, 65–6, who accepts the possibility of a popular etiology and postulates the connection between this denomination and the symptoms of those who suffer from migraine, in accordance with the data of contemporary medicine.

³⁶ For the relation between the goddess and magic, see Acts, 19, 24–41. For Artemis's chthonian and lunar attributes, see Hopfner 1939, 125–45; Hopfner 1942, 167–200.

Antaura, where are you going?
 Into the half-part of the head.
 No, do not [go] into the [half-part of the head]...³⁷

5. In conclusion, the identical structure and the similar textual motifs validate the comparison between the Slavonic and Romanian charms against the *năjit* and the Greek charms against migraine. The structural analysis of the Greek, Slavonic and Romanian texts shows that the transmission hardly modified their common model. Apart from the change of the protective deity and the omission of the demon's name, the main differences are found, on the one hand, in the detail of the demonic shouts, specific to the Greek texts, and, on the other, in the detail of the dried sea, specific to the Slavonic and Romanian versions.

In the Romanian version, the single text based exclusively on the Antique *historiola* is named *descântec* (charm, incantation) and was copied for private use; most of the other texts, generally named *molitvă* (prayer, exorcism), attach multiple Christian references to the old epic scenario. The strong presence in the prayers and invocations of important figures the Christian belief, along with the gradual identification of the demon *năjit* with the Devil, explain the prolific diffusion of these charms, camouflaged in religious writings, within manuscript exorcism collections, mainly copied and probably also used by clergymen.

It seems probable that the Christianisation of the manuscript charms finally contributed to their integration into printed prayer books. The oldest example of this kind dates from 1851, when a prayer that is intended to cure the *năjit* appears in an abbreviated *euchologion* printed in Sibiu. The prototype of the prayer is exactly this manuscript charm version.³⁸ In order to fit into the composition of the book, the charm suffered a major reordering: the epic scenario entirely disappeared; however, the new prayer, which comprises exclusively the last part of the manuscript texts—that is, the prayer to the Lord, a conju-

³⁷ I am using Kotansky's translation; see Kotansky 1994, 60.

³⁸ The text, entitled *Rugăciunea pentru năjit* (*The prayer against the năjit*), begins with the formula *Domnului să ne rugăm* (*Let us pray to the Lord*) and is printed in *Aghiasmataru* 1851, 173–4. It was partially edited, in verse form and with several errors of transcription, in Teodorescu 1982, 447; I have given a new complete edition in Timotin 2006, 79.

ration of the disease, and a final invocation of Christ, of the Blessed Mary and of the celestial powers—still provides a complete description of the patient's bodily parts susceptible to attack by the *năjit*: the head, the brain, the eyes, the teeth, the nostrils, the ears and the neck. More recently, the prayer was once again modified and, by completely effacing the direct conjuration to the disease, it was left with no trace of the old text.³⁹

The results of this study also allow the discussion of a methodological problem by reconsidering other comparative research projects that have also referred to the Greek texts against migraine or the Slavonic texts against the *năjit*. Leaving aside the few studies that have supported the relation between the Slavonic texts against the *năjit* and the occidental charms in which one of the malefic demons is *nessia*,⁴⁰ there are many investigations that have stressed the connection between the Greek texts against migraine and the Slavonic magic writings against fever (see, for example, Jansiewitsch 1910, 628–30; Barb 1966, 3–4). This necessitates an evaluation of the rapport between these analyses and the one developed here.

In my opinion, they are complementary research projects. On the one hand, the present investigation has followed the manuscript transmission of a charm in a space in which this direction of diffusion (from Greek to Slavonic and finally to Romanian literature) was specific, as evidenced by various other types of writings. In this way philological research has become a reliable method for demonstrating that a remote pre-Christian belief survived under the semblance of highly Christianised texts. On the other hand, the charms against migraine, *năjit* or fever are all, typologically, a *Begegnungssegen*; as for their rapport with this

³⁹ See *Molitfelnic cuprinzând slujbe, rânduieli și rugăciuni săvârșite de preot la diferite trebuințe din viața creștinilor*, printed with the approval of the Holy Synod, Bucharest, 1998, 322–3. The insertion of this prayer in the *euchologion* is once again very surprising, since the name of the disease is explained in a footnote, which suggests that the priests might have not been aware of the exact utilisation of the text.

⁴⁰ The comparison was defended by Mansikka, who presumed a common etymology of the denominations of the two demons: see Mansikka 1909, 52–3; this opinion was refuted by Ohrt 1929–30.

charm type,⁴¹ characterised by the encounter between a powerful deity and a malefic demon, who describes his future malevolent actions and is finally chased away by the more powerful being, they can be considered as allomorphs, which are more or less different one from another,⁴² but whose variation may not always indicate a direct derivation.

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⁴¹ For a programmatic study on the importance of achieving a typology of charms and for examples of the differences between charms belonging to the same type, see Roper 2004, 128–44.

⁴² The degree of variation is to be established after separate studies. The main difference between the charms against migraine or *năjit* and the texts against fever is the number of demonic beings. In the latter it is always a group for which the patient's head is not the preferred target, but only a possible one.

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CHAPTER XI

Charming The Moon: Moon Charms for Sick Children in Portuguese Ethnography

Francisco Vaz Da Silva

In this paper I draw attention to a set of moon charms performed for sick children, which I propose to interpret in the light of the fundamental link between water, soul cycles and lunar phases. Let me start with the longstanding notion of water/soul oscillations between this world and the otherworld in the *longue durée* of European cultures.

Homer (*Iliad* 8.552) depicts Tartarus as “the pit of earth and sea”, and Socrates (*Phaedo* 112 a–b) affirms that into Tartarus “all the rivers flow together, and from it they flow forth again” in a back-and-forth movement. The same crucial notion appears in German mythology under the name of *Hvergelmir*, the great underground tunnel “from and to which ‘all waters find their way.’” Viktor Rydberg adds that *Hvergelmir* provided Germanic peoples with an explanation of the tides. Likewise, Socrates emphasises that since the chasm is bottomless (for it bores right through the earth), “the mass of liquid has no bottom or foundation; so it oscillates and surges to and fro, and the air or breath that belongs to it does the same.” Moreover, Socrates notes, “Just as when we breathe we exhale and inhale the breath in a continuous stream, so in this case too the breath, oscillating with the liquid, causes terrible and monstrous winds as it passes in and out.” Hence originate the tides and winds on earth (Homer 1998, 247; Rydberg 1907, 421; Plate 1963, 92–93).

Socrates’ analogy between the circulation of breath and human breathing is significant in the light of the widespread identification of a person’s last breath with the exiting of the life principle. As Walter Burkert notes, *psyche* is both that something that exits the body at death

and the “breath just as *psychein* is the verb to breathe.” In this perspective, the analogy between the body breathing and the rhythmic movement of “the air or breath” through Tartarus suggests an identity between this air and departed souls. In other words, breath carried by the waters between the upper and lower regions connotes the soul carried by the waters between this world and the otherworld (Burkert 1987, 195).

Indeed, the to-and-fro circulation of water and breath through Tartarus accords with the folk notion of mutual inversion between the two realms. Socrates states that low tides in the upper region bring about high tides in the lower region, and vice versa (*Phaedo* 112 b–c). The underlying equation between the antipodes and the otherworld is plain in Virgil’s statement that whereas one pole is always high above us, the pole beneath our feet is in sight of the black Styx and the dead. And the poet goes on to link the lower region to ocean waters and lifeless silent night, then to propose equivalence between our sunrise and the sunset in the nether region (*Georgics* 1.242–51). One obvious implication is that each new cycle proceeds from the nether realm of waters.

This brings us to the ancient link between waters and generation. For instance, the parallelism between Homer’s statement that Oceanus is the progenitor “of all [the gods]” (*Iliad* 14.246) and Plato’s assertion that “the soul came first” (*Laws* 892 c) is anything but casual. Richard Onians explains river worship in ancient Greek folklore by way of the hypothesis that “rivers were regarded as generative powers and givers of seed.” Moreover, Onians pinpoints the snake connotation of Oceanus, nine times wound around the earth, and he relates this connotation to the notion that “the procreative element in any body was the *psyche*, which appeared in the form of a serpent.” These remarks imply overall equivalence between the procreative life fluid of snake-like Oceanus, generating the soul, and spinal marrow, which was believed to take serpentine form.¹

In short, Socrates’ depiction of the movement of waters and the pertaining *psyche* between the upper and the lower regions is actually

¹ I am following the translation of Homer favored by Onians 1973, 247, and by Flacelière in Homère, *Iliade. Odyssée*, 1965, 334. I am using A. E. Taylor’s translation of *Laws* in Plato 1963, 1447. Onians 1973, 230 and 249, cf. 251. Concerning the snake essence of Oceanus and the snake form of marrow, see 206–7, 247–51 and 315–6.

one instance of the wider notion that departed souls regenerate in the watery underworld. Indeed, correlation between waters and souls is conspicuous in immemorial folklore. James Frazer recalls the ancient belief, attributed to Aristotle, that no creature can die except at ebb tide.² “The belief, if we can trust Pliny, was confirmed by experience, so far as regards human beings, on the coast of France. Philostratus also assures us that in Cadiz dying people never yielded up the ghost while the water was high. A like fancy still lingers in some parts of Europe. In Portugal, all along the coast of Wales, and on some parts of the coast of Brittany, a belief is said to prevail that people are born when the tide comes in, and die when it goes out. Dickens attests the existence of the same superstition in England. ‘People can’t die, along the coast,’ said Mr. Peggotty, ‘except when the tide’s pretty nigh out. They can’t be born, unless it’s pretty nigh in – not properly born till flood.’ The belief that most deaths happen at ebb tide is said to be held along the east coast of England from Northumberland to Kent. Shakespeare must have been familiar with it, for he makes Falstaff die ‘even just between twelve and one, e’en at the turning o’ the tide’” (Frazer 1987, 35).

Since lunar influence over tides has been assumed for some time, it stands to reason that the moon itself rules the circulation of breath/soul. For this reason, the shuffler of souls affects people with fragile links between the body and the soul – as the Moon itself puts it in a Portuguese folktale, “All those who are ill close their windows on me as soon as it gets dark.” Given the “very old opinion that the soul is a breath” (to use Franz Cumont’s expression), there is widespread fear of what the Portuguese call “bad air” (*ar mau*). Indeed, the Portuguese declaration that babies are not to “catch air” and the Anatolian belief that “most illnesses come from draughts” echo each other across Europe. In both cases, newborn babies need to be protected from roaming breaths/spirits, which includes swaddling in airtight bundles and hiding from the night satellite, for the phases of the moon supposedly shuffle breaths/souls around (Braga 1987, 134; Cumont n.d., 191; Vasconcelos 1988, 56; Delaney 1991, 65; Vasconcelos 1982, 18).

² Long before, Cicero (*On the Nature of the Gods* 2.7), for example, takes the lunar influence on tides for granted.

It is in this frame of mind that we should approach the moon charms that I am about to present. It used to be considered common sense in Portugal that any nappies hanging outside to dry should be collected before sunset to avoid *moon sickness*, otherwise called “airing” (*arejo*) or “air” (*ar*). “Airing” describes the entry of an invading soul into a body deemed open. The bodies of both newborn babies and recent mothers are supposed to be open for forty days after delivery, and any “turning of the moon” (*volta de lua*) affects them, which suggests that the lunar circulation of souls is the underlying danger. Indeed, the moon must be visible if one is to “cut the air” (*talhar o ar*) causing sickness to a child (Vasconcelos 1982, 27–33; Vasconcelos 1988, 60, 121 and 128).

According to a description of this healing ritual, the child’s face is laid bare before the moon while the following prayer is uttered:

Moon, moonshine,
Take back your air,
Let the child
Grow, thrive.³

Here is another charm:

Oh moon, oh moonshine,
Leave my child to thrive;
Leave here all its wellness
and take with you all its illness.⁴

According to yet another description, the child’s bare buttocks must be turned to the moon, which is prayed to “take back the air of my

³ “Lua, luar,
Leva o teu ar,
Deixa o menino
Crescer, medrar”
(Vasconcelos 1982, 33).

⁴ “Ó Lua, ó luar,
Dêxa o mê menino pra bẽ criar;
Dêxa todo o sê bẽi
E leva todo o sê mal”
(Vasconcelos 1982, 29).

child / and let it thrive” (*Leva o ar do meu menino / E deixa-mo medrar*); after this, one must withdraw with the infant. More examples could be added, but they run along basically the same lines. Considered together, these moon charms suggest that the purpose of the rite is to trade back the *bad air* that the moon has supposedly brought on the child for the *good air* that it had taken away (which is why the sick baby’s body openings are exposed to the moon). The full underlying notion is spelled out in the following formula, to be said by daytime along with fumigations:

The moon has passed here,
Your colour it has taken away
And left its colour on you.
It shall pass here again,
Your own colour it will leave on you
And then take back its own.⁵

While it appears that any aspect of the moon is dangerous to infants, lunar influence is deemed most dangerous in the waxing phase. This could be either because the waxing moon is supposed to absorb the body’s vital fluids and breath even as it increases, or because the crescent moon is supposed to favour an increase in body fluids and, hence, to enhance the danger of possession by alien spirits (see examples of each case in Vasconcelos 1988, 121, 123 and 128).

Theoretically speaking, this alternative corresponds to two possible ways of assessing the moon’s influence on bodies. According to one view, body fluids (and the attendant breath) are supposed to increase and decrease along with the moon’s waxing and waning phases. This perspective yields beliefs supposing a parallelism between newborn babies and the new moon, which posit that incarnation of the soul and the waxing moon are in tune. It also accounts for the

⁵ “A lua por aqui passou,
A tua cor te levou
E a dela deixou;
Ela há-de tornar aqui a passar,
A tua cor te há-de deixar
E a dela há-de levar”
(Vasconcelos 1988, 121–2).

notion that women menstruate while the moon empties. From this standpoint, Aristotle (*History of Animals* 7.2.582 b) reports, “the wiseacres assert that the moon is feminine, because the discharge in women and the waning of the moon happen at one and the same time, and after the wane and the discharge both one and the other grow whole again.” But according to another possible way of assessing the moon’s influence on bodies, the waning moon’s release of substance causes an increase in body fluids, and (by the same token) the waxing moon’s pull of vital stuff operates to decrease body fluids. This point of view underlies the seventeenth-century saying (quoted by John Brand) that “when the moon’s in the full, then wit’s in the wane.” In the same vein, a French early twentieth-century medical doctor explains that the new (therefore waxing) moon has an attractive and ascending influence, whereas the full (therefore waning) moon exerts a depressing and descending action. This is seemingly the right perspective to interpret the notion that births tend to happen around the full moon.⁶

Overall, both views fit the moon charms examined here insofar as the latter assume that the moon takes the child’s *air* even as the child is invaded by an alien soul. This purported trade-off owes, of course, to the underlying notion of lunar cyclicity. By definition, cyclical settings make opposites coalesce insofar as every ending is also a beginning, and vice versa. Hence, while the dark moon is associated with death, it is deemed to be *new* (therefore waxing) and connotes rejuvenation. Conversely, while the light of the full moon spells out the apogee of moon cycles, it also starts the waning phase of the *old* moon.

Overall, I have argued that lunar charms in Portuguese ethnography presuppose the widespread notion that lunar phases control transitions of the air/soul (along with fluids) between this world and the otherworld. Supposedly, small children not yet firmly moored in this world are particularly vulnerable to such oscillations. They easily come under the influence of the moon in its cycles, which is why they should be protected from moonshine. This is also one reason why any small child taken outdoors at night should, it is believed, be covered with

⁶ I am using D’A. W. Thompson’s translation of *History of Animals* in Aristotle, *The Complete Works* 1995, vol. 1, 774–993. Brand–Ellis 1849, vol. 3, 145; Saintyves 1937, 212.

men's clothing (Vasconcelos 1988, 29). Until the souls of infants are deemed to be firmly anchored, an emphasis on linear time, associated with maleness (away from cyclical operators, deemed to be feminine), is necessary so that newborn babies may follow their allotted life thread.

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CHAPTER XII

“Dear Merciful Mother”: The Virgin Mary in Finnish and Karelian Birth Incantations

Maarit Viljakainen

In her monograph *Mythic Images* (Siikala 2002), Anna-Leena Siikala points out that in order to perform a task successfully, a *tietäjä*, a specialist in a rite tradition, summons her or his assistants in the form of various supernatural beings. Siikala analyses a bathing formula recorded by Elias Lönnrot from a well-known *tietäjä*, Juhana Kainulainen, in Kesälahti, Finnish North Karelia, in 1828. There can be no doubt that some of the most eloquent and wide-ranging appeals for assistance in Finnish incantation materials are to be found in Kainulainen’s incantation. It should be noted that the incantation is really long, over 300 verses. While healing his patient, Kainulainen turned to Christian helpers and certain higher beings from within the sphere of ethnic religion. He calls upon Väinämöinen, Päivätär, “the old woman Kaveh”, also known as Luonnotar, a female nature deity, and Louhi, “Mistress of Pohjola”, for help. Kainulainen’s incantation also includes a demand for help addressed to the dead and to demons. Siikala points out that we may assume that, being a singer of epic poetry, Kainulainen applied characters familiar from the epic to his incantations (Siikala 2002, 196–8).

The bathing formula recorded from Kainulainen is constructed almost entirely around the episodes invoking the helpers. In his incantation, the *tietäjä* begs for help and cries for protection from Jesus “my master” and Mary “my mistress”. He needs help “in this task most toilsome, in this casting most difficult” (tässä työssä työlähässä, valanteissa vaikiassa). The *tietäjä* turns frequently to his helpers “if there is not man in me, to complete this tiring task” (un ei liene

minussa miestä, tämän jakson jaksaoa). Siikala notes that the order of the requests for help does not on the surface appear to adhere to any clear schema. For example, the Virgin Mary, “motherly one, pure and shapely mistress” (emonen, puhas muori muollinen), is appealed to time and again, both at the beginning and the end of the incantation. Although Kainulainen does seek help from several figures in more or less the same way, the various supernatural beings were not equally important to the *tietäjä* or capable of providing assistance in the same way. Siikala asks the following questions: Which being was appealed to in which context? How was the request or demand for help presented? What type of influences was each supernatural being thought capable of exerting? (Siikala 2002, 196–99)

The incantation recorded from Juhana Kainulainen and Siikala’s analysis and questions have inspired my own research work. In this paper, I take a closer look at the Virgin Mary in Finnish-Karelian birth incantations. My focus is on the incantation texts, particularly on the texts in which Mary is mentioned. The questions asked here include the following: What kind of divine birth assistant is Mary? How is Mary described in incantation verses? How is Mary asked for help? What kind of help is asked for?

According to Senni Timonen, certain features occur in poetry throughout Karelia. For example, the Virgin Mary is everywhere. Timonen points out that Mary has acquired sharply contrasting interpretations in different traditions of the church and people. All the canonical images of Mary have existed in Karelia side by side, overlapping, merging and at times quite separate from one another, and in their numerous transformations they have passed into popular belief. Although the Reformation ended the veneration of Mary in western Finland and Finnish North Karelia during the seventeenth century, numerous indications of Mary’s medieval glory can be found even in the twentieth century. In Orthodox Karelia, popular worship of Mary survived uninterrupted alongside the official faith from the Middle Ages until the twentieth century (Timonen 1994, 301–2).

Timonen points out that study of the Karelian material reveals two main types of tradition associated with Mary: one recorded among Orthodox believers, the other among Lutherans. In both traditions, in western Finland and among Swedish-speaking Finns, healers invoked Mary’s help. In western Finland, incantations appealing to Mary are

short and refer to her from a relative distance, as a memory. Further east, however, Marian themes and motifs increase in variety and number. Timonen points out that direct appeals, prayers and pleas to Mary are typical for incantations collected in Savo and especially in Karelia, and even more so in Orthodox Karelia. As Timonen notes, she is no longer just a memory, but is present in person. In Orthodox Karelia, incantations addressed to Mary focus on the world of women: childbirth, sexual arousal, care of children and livestock, and tending wounds (Timonen 1994, 302–3).

Birth Incantations

The source material of my paper consists of birth incantations. Altogether, there are 219 texts of various lengths. The longest text is composed of 234 verses, whereas the shortest text consists of only one verse.¹ My source texts were collected mainly in eastern Finland and Karelia.² These incantations were for the most part collected during the nineteenth century and have been published in the series *Suomen Kansan Vanhat Runot* (Ancient Poems of the Finnish People; abbr.: SKVR) during the twentieth century. It is relevant to note that my research material has been recorded from both Lutheran and Orthodox believers.

Some of my source texts are accompanied by varying contextual information. There are various descriptions of magical acts as well as comments and advice on how to solve the situation at hand. For example, an incantation recorded from Uukuniemi, Ladoga Karelia, is accompanied by the comment “when childbirth was not going well, the

¹ SKVR XII: 2 6212. Kajaanin kihlakunta. Lönnrot, A 11 3 no. 59. 1833. SKVR XII: 2 6237. Sodankylä. Paulaharju, 10775. 1920. References to my source texts begin with the acronym SKVR, followed by the volume and sub-volume number, the number of the text, then recording place, who recorded the text, and recording date.

² My study covers Archangel Karelia (SKVR I: 4), Savo (SKVR VI: 2), Finnish North Karelia (SKVR VII: 4), Ladoga Karelia (SKVR VII: 4), North Ostrobothnia (SKVR XII: 2) and South Karelia/Karelian Isthmus (SKVR XIII: 3).

following was read” (kun lapsi ei hyvästi syntynyt, luettiin).³ There are also comments such as “when you say these following words to a wife (giving birth) in the bathhouse, you will need no other doctor” (saunassa (synnyttämässä) olevalle vaimolle kun loitsii seuraavat sanat, niin ei sitte tarvitse synnyttäessä muuta lääkäriä)⁴—and “this is true, no matter what they might say, proven true many a time” (se onki tosi, sanottakoon mitä tahansa, sitte se un monasti koettu).⁵ In some cases, descriptions show in detail in which manner the birth incantation was to be performed.

There are also data on who knew the birth incantations. For example, 63 birth incantations have been collected in Finnish North Karelia and Ladoga Karelia. In 32 cases the name of the person who knew the incantation has been written down. It is interesting that most of these informants were in fact men. This shows that men also knew birth incantations.⁶ However, it should be stressed that in 31 cases there is no name. There are also various data on the person’s own source for knowledge of the incantations. For example, 83-year-old Karppa Osiipov Kirjavainen from Suistamo, Ladoga Karelia, had learnt his “songs” from his grandfather Kuisma Kirjavainen.⁷ In some cases, birth incantations had been heard from “the elders”.⁸

The purpose of birth incantations was to ease the mother’s pain. Incantation verses such as “release the maiden from this tight spot, the wife’s belly from these cramps” (päästä piika pinnehistä, vaimo vatta vääntehistä) occur in my source texts.⁹ Naturally, it was important to release a baby into this world. Verses such as “release the traveller onto

³ SKVR VII: 4 3006. Uukuniemi. Tuokko, no. 40. 1913.

⁴ SKVR VI: 2 4643. Virtsalmi. Makkonen, T. V., no. 75. 1907.

⁵ SKVR XII: 2 6206. Piippola. Keränen, E., no. 240. 1884[?].

⁶ Keinänen examines the collection of childbirth traditions and sexual lore in her study: Keinänen 2003, 29–33. Also see Stark-Arola 1998, 138.

⁷ SKVR VII: 4 3019. Suistamo. Härkönen, I., no. 29. 1900.

⁸ SKVR I: 4 944. Luvajärvi. Meriläinen, no. 2041. 1889. SKVR I: 4 975. Uhtua. Meriläinen, no. 807. 1889. SKVR VI: 2 4643. Virtsalmi. Makkonen, T. V., no. 75. 1907.

⁹ SKVR I: 4 949. Akonlahti[?], Castrén, no. 38 a. 1839. SKVR I: 4 959. Borenus III, no. 65. 1877. SKVR VII: 4 3037. Liperi, Ahlqvist B., no. 11. 1846. SKVR VII: 4 3034. Kitee. Lonkainen, no. 75 b. 1901. SKVR XIII: 3 9466. Metsäpirtti, Vaskela. Neovius, no. 425. 1888. SKVR XII: 2 6208. Pyhäntä. Krohn, no. 1103. 1884. SKVR XIII: 3 9478. Jaakkima, Parkommäki. Sirelius, no. 185. 1847.

the earth, the tiny-fingered one into the yard” (päässä maalle matkami-estä, pienisormista pihalle) and “I release the traveller onto the earth, the tiny-fingered one into the yard, to march in these lands, to admire this world” (päästän maalle matkamiestä, pienisormista pihalle, näitä maita marsimahan, ilmoja ihaelemaan) occur frequently.¹⁰ On the basis of my source texts it appears that an essential task was to break or open “the locks of bone” (luiset lukot) or “the bony gates” (luiset portit) that obstructed the child’s exit.

Marja-Liisa Keinänen’s study shows that the childbearer herself employed certain methods to ease her delivery in normal circumstances.¹¹ If a delivery proceeded well, women did not ask for help. In those cases where the delivery was complicated and prolonged because of supernatural causes, such as curses, the evil eye or related phenomena, a specialist with special skills and extraordinary powers was called for help. For example, the power to stop bleeding was very important. Keinänen notes that the birth assistant—female members of the extended family, the “professional” birth assistant, or the *tietäjä*—could combine any number of methods according to the type of disorder and their personal preferences. A variety of methods was employed to facilitate delivery. This shows that women did not submissively resign themselves to the painful fate that God had ordained. According to Keinänen, as a divine birth assistant the Virgin Mary also legitimised the use of pain-killing methods (Keinänen 2003, 128–9, 130, 169–71 and 179).

The birth incantations of my research material are constructed almost entirely around the episodes invoking various supernatural

¹⁰ SKVR I: 4 956. Kivijärvi. Marttinen, no. 85. 1893. SKVR I: 4 963. Vuonninen?. Kant, 4: s osa, s. 3. 1828?. SKVR I: 4 974. Uhtua. Borenus, II no. 43. 1879. SKVR VI: 2 4638. Juva. Gottlund, no. 545. 1823. SKVR VI: 2 4642. Savonranta. Väisänen, O., no. 7. 1908. SKVR VII: 4 3012. Impilahti. Langinen, no. 107. 1887. SKVR VII: 4 3041. Kaavi. Roschier, no. 10. 1854. SKVR XIII: 3 9484. Hiitola. Viipurin lyse. Konv. 31. 1894.

¹¹ Keinänen notes that her study covers an area that could be called Orthodox Karelia, even though the Karelian border regions had a substantial Lutheran population. The sources that she used were for the most part collected during the half-century between the 1880s and the 1940s. The sources describe the actual practices of the late nineteenth and the early twentieth century, even though some traditions continued to be practised until the Second World War. Keinänen 2003, 13–5.

helpers. In most cases an incantation begins by naming the supernatural entity that is to help in the proceedings. The most central motifs, such as naming the helpers and calling for their help, explaining the reason for calling and releasing the child into the world by opening the female body, are repeated within the text of one incantation as well as in others.

In my source texts, the Virgin Mary and Ukko, “the highest god”, are most often called on for help for both mother and child. Other figures that were appealed to, although less frequently than to Mary and Ukko, include various female and male entities. In almost every birth incantation in my research material, the reciter appeals to some supernatural or a holy entity. In an incantation recorded in Iisalmi, Savo, it is plainly stated that in this situation no human is of any help.¹² The speaker of the text is humbly aware of his/her own powerlessness. A short incantation and its description that were recorded in Kittilä, Lapland, also tell of the importance and necessity of these helpers:

The old woman Kurula was always asked to travel as a midwife and when she came to help, upon entering she would speak these words:

Jesus appear,
 Virgin Mary as the third one!
 And only then would she take on the task set upon her.¹³

In brief, one might say that it was impossible to solve the situation at hand without supernatural helpers.

“Dear Merciful Mother”

As noted earlier, the Virgin Mary is often requested for help. For example, in 30 cases of the 63 birth incantations recorded in Finnish North Karelia and Ladoga Karelia Mary is asked to help a woman in

¹² SKVR VII: 2 4662. Iisalmi. Ignatius, K., no. 15. 1885.

¹³ “Jesus tänne,
 Neitsyt Maria kolmanneksi!
 Ja sitten se vasta rupesti toimeensa.”
 SKVR XII: 2 6233. Kittilä. Paulaharju, J. 10830. 1921.

labour. For this reason, the question of Mary’s personality is interesting. How is she characterised in birth incantation verses? It should be stressed that not only is Mary popular in birth incantations but the name of Mary is mentioned more than any other person in the surviving texts from Finland and Karelia (Timonen 1994, 302).

In birth incantations, the name of Mary is often accompanied by specified and repeated definitions. Mary is the “motherly one” (emonen), “dear merciful mother (rakas äiti armollinen), “the eldest of wives, the first mother among people” (jok oot vanhiv vaimoksista, emoksista ensimmäinen) and “pure and shapely mistress” (puhas muori muo’ollinen). In an incantation recorded in Iisalmi, Savo, Mary is “you, the best one to be called to the bathhouse” (sinä paras saunaan tulia).¹⁴ All in all, these definitions emphasise her goodness, flawlessness, wisdom and experience of life. In a nutshell, she is the best. It should be noted that the above-mentioned definitions are very similar in my source texts collected both in Finland and Karelia.

Particularly in some incantation texts collected in Archangel Karelia and northern Ostrobothnia, appeals to help include descriptions of Mary’s looks, especially her clothes. According to these texts, Mary is wearing shoes, black or white socks and a skirt.¹⁵ Mary is asked to lift up the hem of her skirt so that she can run more quickly. Mary is also asked to hurry “one foot in a shoe, the other without” (jalka olkaan kengässä, toinen olkaan kengätä).¹⁶ Incantation verses also reveal some other aspects of Mary. Apparently, Mary dwells in heaven: she is “a holy maid heavenly one” (pyhä piika taivahinen) and “heavenly one”, (taivahinen).¹⁷ In three texts from Archangel Karelia, she is somewhere on the other side of the river. She is ordered to cross

¹⁴ SKVR VI: 2 4663. Iisalmi. Rytkönen, K., no. 3. 1921. Kaarle Krohn has analysed the image of the Virgin Mary in incantations: see Krohn 1915, 215–7.

¹⁵ SKVR I: 4 973. Uhtua. Cajan, no. 64. 1836. SKVR I: 4 945. Miinoa. Prihti, no. 16. 1908. SKVR I: 4 966. Vuonnineneno Paulaharju, no. 4363. 1911. XII: 2 6227. Oulunjärven seud. Karjalainen, no. 10. 1882. XII: 2 6229. Pohjanmaa. Reguly, A. Y. Wichmannin kopio 2. 1840. XII: 2 6231. Kemi[?]. Topelius Vanh. Runo IV, s. 19. 1829.

¹⁶ SKVR VII: 4 3028. Suojärvi. Krohn, no. 5723. 1884.

¹⁷ SKVR I: 4 945. Miinoa. Karjalainen, no. 45. 894. SKVR VI: 2 4662. Iisalmi. Ignatius, K., no. 15. 1885.

the river and come here.¹⁸ It is also interesting that according to two texts from the Karelian Isthmus, Mary is asleep. She has to wake up and then hurry to help a woman in pain.¹⁹

Above all, the Virgin Mary is a mother. As I mentioned above, Mary is “motherly one” and “dear merciful mother”. In an example from Ilomantsi, Finnish North Karelia, the speaker asks “Where can I get help in this situation?” The answer is, however, self-evident: “I can get help from my mother Mary and my father Jesus.”²⁰ In another example from Metsäpirtti, Karelian Isthmus, Mary is also “my mother” (*miu emmoin*).²¹ This shows that the speaker’s relationship with Mary is very intimate. In fact, they are closely related.

An emphasis on Mary’s own experience in pregnancy and delivery can be seen in an incantation recorded from a 40-year-old man called Ville Ruotsalainen in Iisalmi, Savo, in 1885.²² The incantation is accompanied by the interesting comment: according to the informant, he has “made” the incantation himself. In this incantation, Mary “heavenly one, dear merciful mother”, is asked to help a woman, who is described as being totally helpless and in severe pain. It is also mentioned that in this situation no human is of any help. It is interesting that the speaker of the text emphasises particularly the fact that Mary did not suffer any pain when carrying her own son: “you did not suffer any agony, you did not know any pain” (*etkä kipuja kokenut, tuskista et paljon tiennyt*). It is important here that Mary shares experiences in pregnancy and delivery with the helpless woman, even though, according to Ruotsalainen’s words, Mary herself has not suffered. Marja-Liisa Keinänen points out that a Karelian birth assistant must fulfil an important requirement: she must have given birth herself. The birth assistant, herself having experienced the birth pains, was assumed to be able to show empathy to the suffering women. A childless woman

¹⁸ SKVR I: 4 955. Akonlahti. Nasto Lesojeff, no. 86. 1912. SKVR I: 4 956. Kivijärvi. Marttinen, no. 85. 1893. SKVR I: 4 958. Kivijärvi. Marttinen, no. 931. 1910.

¹⁹ SKVR XIII: 3 9466. Metsäpirtti, Vaskela. Neovius, no. 425. 1888. SKVR XIII: 3 9467. Metsäpirtti. Neovius, no. 426. 1888.

²⁰ SKVR VII: 4 3056. Ilomantsi. Eur. Fol. III 1, no. 8. 1845.

²¹ SKVR XIII: 3 9466. Metsäpirtti, Vaskela. Neovius, no. 425. 1888.

²² SKVR VI: 2 4662. Iisalmi. Ignatius, K. no. 15. 1885.

was only asked to help in exceptional circumstances (Keinänen 2003, 169 and 171–2).

It should be pointed out that two Ladoga Karelian birth incantations from my material include the story of how Mary was fertilised by a berry.²³ The story tells of how the berry calls to Mary from a hill. Mary cannot ignore its call. She leaves her home, goes to the hill and, finally, eats the berry. Consequently, Mary gets pregnant immediately. In both incantations, the story of the fertilisation is followed by requests to the Virgin Mary for help. Senni Timonen notes that by telling of the mythical impregnation and birth, its performance conveys strength to birth-givers, likening them to Mary. Telling of Mary's fertilisation leads also to the request to "the first mother among people" for help. As a matter of fact, being "the first mother", Mary is under an obligation to help the parturient in pain.²⁴

It is also interesting that some women have explained their choice of the birthing place with reference to the birth of Christ. According to the comment recorded in Kiimasjärvi, Archangel Karelia, in 1888, women should give birth in "a room where horses were kept, because the Saviour was born in a stable" (*siitä, syystä semmoisessa huoneessa, jossa on hevosia pitetty, kuin Vapahtaja syntyi tallissa, niin luultaan sinne tulevan mielellään auttamaan*). According to this comment, the stable was a convenient place of delivery because it was believed that the Virgin Mary, who had given birth in the stable, would be pleased to assist a woman who gave birth in a similar way.²⁵ Timonen's study shows that the tradition of Orthodox Karelia in particular draws conscious and direct parallels between the supplicant and the Virgin Mary:

²³ SKVR VII: 4 3013. Suistamo. Sirelius, no. 120. 1847. SKVR VII: 4 3046. Pälkjärvi. Massinen, no. 40. 1894.

²⁴ In her article Timonen examines "The Creator's song" or "The Song of Mary", which is in fact an extensive concatenation of interlinking poems. It grows into a miniature epic. Timonen examines the parts of the epic that she regards as Marian poems. The poem "Impregnation: the Berry Miracle" tells of how Mary gets pregnant. See Timonen 1994, 305, 307–10 and 323.

²⁵ SKVR I: 4 982. Kiimasjärvi, Meril, no. 64. 1888; Keinänen 2003, 121. In the above-mentioned study Keinänen examines the choice of the birthing place in Karelia, 120–2.

you too have given birth, you know what it involves, so please come and help me (Timonen 1994, 303).

Keinänen also notes that high demands were put on the moral standards and even the personality of the birth assistant (Keinänen 2003, 172). I have shown earlier that according to my source texts Mary is wise, experienced, good and even flawless. Thus she seems to be a fully competent birth assistant.

“Come Here when Called for!”

How is the Virgin Mary called for help? At times the instructions given to Mary are very precise. They state how she is supposed to arrive at the right place in the right way. In the incantations on which I based my research, Mary is asked to appear here, most often the bathhouse, or “sauna”. The calls for aid repeat instructions on how the helper must arrive at the bathhouse: quietly and without alerting any outsiders. An emphasis on urgency can also be found in incantation verses: Mary has to appear immediately. Mary is asked to hurry and run quickly “when the aching one is screaming, when the pained one is crying” (*hätähis en huutaessa, pakkohisen parkuessa*).²⁶ Appeals to help include incantation verses such as “come here when called for” (*käy tänne kutsuttaessa*), “come here when needed” (*tule tänne tarvittaessa*) and “come here when ordered” (*käy tänne käskettäessä*).

In birth incantations, descriptions of the poor state of the woman giving birth are joined in the calls for help either in a few lines or in longer motifs. There are also questions regarding the nature of the problems that the woman who is calling out for pain is experiencing and why she is suffering. Defining and explaining the situation at hand seems to be important. Moreover, by describing the problems with the delivery the speaker is justifying the call for supernatural help. They emphasise that the pain and suffering are real and that they are by no means disturbing the helper in vain.

²⁶ SKVR I: 4 Kivijärvi. Marttinen, no. 85. 1893. SKVR 973. Uhtua. Cajan, no. 64. 1836. SKVR VI: 2 4638. Juva. Gottlund, no. 545. 1823. SKVR VI: 2 4658. Kiuruvesi. Arvidsson & Crohns, no. 486: 6 C. 1819. SKVR VII: 4 3053. Kiihtelysvaara. Rytönen, A., no. 559. 1895.

The helper, such as the Virgin Mary, is told to come to the bath-house in complete silence “without the door squeaking, without the hinges squealing” (ilman ukseen ulvomata, saranan narajamata).²⁷ She is also asked to “smear the doors with beer, the hinges with ale” (oluella ukset voia, kasta kaljalla saranat), just to make sure that the doors do not make any sound.²⁸ Conversely, the birth-giver is described as expressing her birth pains directly by moaning and screaming aloud. According to an incantation from Uhtua, Archangel Karelia, recorded by Heikki Meriläinen in the year 1889, the childbearer is screaming and crying at such a volume that “the earth beneath is cracking, the heaven above is splitting” (maa alla pakahteleivi, taivas tahtovi haleta).²⁹ In an incantation recorded in Juva, Savo, the Virgin Mary is asked to listen to the painful moans of the woman giving birth.³⁰ Some incantations from South Karelia begin with a motif where the speaker of the incantation tells of how they themselves heard the painful screams as if by chance when they were passing by.³¹

Marja-Liisa Keinänen points out that the general rule in Karelia was that the birth pangs and on-going labour were to be kept secret. Seen from the women’s point of view, concealment was necessary in order to protect the childbearer against harmful influences, such as the evil eye. A pregnant woman usually worked until the very last moment. It was important to behave as normally as possible, because

²⁷ SKVR VI: 2 4633. Savo. Sopanen, no. 1. 1847. SKVR VI: 2 4663. Iisalmi. Rytönen, K., no. 3. 1921. SKVR VII: 4 3007. Impilahti. Sirelius, no. 156. 1847. SKVR VII: 4 3010. Impilahti. Polén, no. 87. 1847. SKVR 3029. Kitee. Gottlund, no. 76. 1816. SKVR XII: 2 6211. Kajaanin kihlak. Lönnrot, A II no. 26. 1832.

²⁸ SKVR VI: 2 4658. Kiuruvesi. Arvidsson & Crohns, no. 486: 6 C. 1819. SKVR VII: 4 3010. Impilahti. Polén, no. 49. 1847. SKVR VII: 4 3031. Kitee. Lönnrot, S., no. 192. 1828. SKVR VII: 4 3041. Kaavi, Roschier, no. 10. 1854.

²⁹ SKVR I: 4 976. Uhtua. Meriläinen, no. 936. 1889. SKVR VI: 2 4658. Kiuruvesi. Arvidsson & Crohns, no. 486: 6 C. 1819.

³⁰ SKVR VI: 2 4636. Juva. Ahlman-Poppius, no. 34. 1813.

³¹ SKVR XIII: 3 9471. Rautu, Riikola. Laiho, L., no. 1905. 1935. SKVR XIII: 3 9581. Muola. Gottlund, 578 a. 1869. SKVR XIII: 3 9488. Parikkala?. Honkakylä. Haalman?, no. 30. In the eighteenth century. SKVR XII: 3 9490. Parikkala. Anttonen, no. 6. 1897. SKVR XIII: 3 9494. Kirvu, Valttula. Nurmiraanta, A., no. 4. 1923.

the most common cause of a prolonged and difficult delivery was that somebody had found out about the on-going labour. If the person who found out about the labour was “bad-blooded”, evil-eyed or envious, the consequences of failure to conceal the situation at hand could be more serious. As Keinänen points out, the woman who suffered without giving herself away to outsiders contrasts dramatically with the screaming and crying childbearer of the incantations. Keinänen suggests that the stoic childbearer could express her pain indirectly through the incantation (Keinänen 2003, 120, 122, 123–4 and 126). On the basis of birth incantations examined here, Keinänen’s observation is very interesting indeed.

Generally speaking, the performers of birth incantations try to prove that the situation is truly dire and a helper is necessary in order get them through it. A repeated emphasis on the necessity of the supernatural help can be found in the incantation texts, for example in the use of the verb “to need”. Distress and pain are very evident in the incantations of my research material, but death is mentioned only on rare occasions. In some cases, however, the nearness of death is commented on very directly: “Death will soon come and take away the soon-to-be mother.”³² By admitting the possibility of death, the speaker is actually using subtle blackmail and threats in order to invoke the supernatural help. If the helper fails to appear, the mother and child will die. Talk of death is also a reminder of the limited skills of humans and increases the need for supernatural help. The need for the Virgin Mary to appear and the real distress become clear when the speaker remarks to the helper that the calls for help are made for a good reason.³³

“Bring Lubricants from Slimy Fish!”

In incantations, the Virgin Mary is portrayed above all as a compassionate caregiver and a tender nurse who relieves pain. Anna-Leena Siikala notes that the *tietäjä* did not appeal to her in banishing a disease

³² SKVR VI: 2 4635. Haukivuori. Hynninen, O., no. 28. 1886. SKVR VI: 2 4641. Savonranta. Lilius, L., no. 61. 1888. SKVR VI: 2 4642. Savonranta. Väisänen, O., no. 7. 1908.

³³ SKVR I: 4 966. Vuonnineneno Paulaharju, no. 4363. 1911.

demon, but rather in requesting an ointment to alleviate the pain or a potion to make the patient well. As an alleviator of pains Mary is akin to *Kivutar* (Maiden of Pain) or *Vammatar* (Maiden of Injury) who, according to incantation verses, gathers up the pain and removes diseases. In the Middle Ages, Mary was a very important figure. In many cases she ousted the regular bringers of relief in Finnish and Scandinavian tradition. Siikala points out that the Virgin Mary of folk belief acquired the attributes of her forebears (Siikala 2002, 200–2). According to Timonen, some of the Marian themes and motifs are pre-Christian and were subsequently attached to Mary. Others are part of common Christian tradition, Western or Orthodox in origin. Timonen notes that the Marian themes are generally regarded as a relic of medieval Roman Catholic culture, which survived on its eastern periphery (Timonen 1994, 302).

In birth incantations, Mary’s job is to facilitate delivery. She is asked to “release the maiden from this tight spot, the wife’s belly from these cramps” (päästä piika pinnehistä, vaimo vatta vääntehistä). According to my source texts, the child is stuck either behind locks and gates or inside “the fleshy box” (lihainen arkku). Therefore Mary is also asked to supply various equipments and ointments, such as lubricants from fish and various weapons, so that she or the speaker of the text can release the child into the world from the mother’s womb.

In an incantation recorded from a well-known *tietäjä* and bridal patron at weddings, Poahkomie Omenaini in Akonlahti, Archangel Karelia, Mary is given precise instructions on how to run into the sea so that she can bring lubrications from slimy fish “with which I grease the bone-gaps” (jolla voian luun lomia).³⁴ According to the instructions, she has to take a sack in which she can carry lubrications from the sea to the bathhouse. In another example from Savonranta, Savo, Mary is ordered to bring lubrications from all fish in the water “with which I brush the sides, with which I smooth the back curves, open thus the fleshy box, lift the bony casket’s lid” (jolla sivuja sivelen, perä vierii vetelen, niin avaa lihaisen arkun, arkun luisen longottele).³⁵ In some incantations collected in Archangel Karelia, the Virgin Mary is

³⁴ SKVR I: 4 951. Akonlahti. Meril, no. 715. 1889.

³⁵ SKVR VI: 2 4641. Savonranta. Lilius, L., no. 61. 1888.

given directions to lift up the hem of her skirt so that she can run easily into the water.³⁶ It is interesting that according to incantation verses Mary moves a lot. As mentioned above, she is asked to run into the sea. Finally, she has to hurry here, to the bathhouse.

As noted earlier, Mary is also ordered to supply weapons: “take your golden hatchet, your silver axe” (*ota kulta kirveesi, hopeinen tapparasi*), and “bring here your golden hatchet, your silver axe” (*tuoos kultakirvehesi, hopiainen tapparasi*).³⁷ As Keinänen notes, these weapons functioned as effective surgical instruments with which Mary or the speaker of the text cuts the “threshold” or “fence” of flesh that obstructed the child’s exit (Keinänen 2003, 129). In some texts from my material, Mary has to supply both lubrications and weapons. For example, in a long incantation text collected in Vuokkiniemi, Archangel Karelia, in 1825, Mary is ordered to bring lubrications from the sea with which the speaker of the text tries to release the baby into the world. The speaker, however, notices that “if it be no help” (*jos siit’ ei apua liene*) then Mary is appealed to again. This time she is asked to bring “a scythe from Estonia” (*viikate Virosta*).

In the birth incantations that I studied, Ukko, “the highest god”, is also ordered to bring weapons such as his axe “so that I may lift the bones” (*jolla luita longottelen*). In any case, by means of either Mary’s or Ukko’s weapons it was possible to clear away obstructions.

In the incantation verses below, the helper and the speaker of the text are in fact working together: Mary or Ukko bring lubrications or surgical instruments and the speaker uses them. In some texts, the supernatural helper not only brings the necessary equipment but also uses it. Sometimes the speaker does not need a supernatural mediator at all: “I take mucus from a ruff-fish, slime from a burbot-fish, with which I grease the bony gates” (*otan kiiskiltä kinoa, matikalta luikastusta, jolla voian luiset portit*).³⁸ However, a repeated emphasis on opening the female body can be seen in birth incantations. I agree with

³⁶ SKVR I: 4 946. Miinoa. Prihti, no. 16. 1908. SKVR I: 4 966. Vuonninen Paulah, no. 4363. 1911. SKVR I: 4 973. Uhut. Cajan, no. 64. 1836.

³⁷ SKVR VI: 2 4658. Kiuruvesi. Arvidsson & Crohns, 486: 6 C. 1819. SKVR VII: 4 3014. Suistamo. Eur. G. no. 464. 1846.

³⁸ SKVR VII: 4 3006. Uukuniemi. Tuokko, no. 40. 1913. SKVR VII: 4 3018. Suistamo. Angervo, no. 3. 1906.

Laura Stark-Arola's observation that it is mainly either the ritual performer or a supernatural being, rather than the mother herself, who is seen to bring the child into the world, by opening the female body. The birth-giver's role is a quite passive one. On the basis of birth incantations it appears that she is the suffering patient rather than the active creator of life (Stark-Arola 1998, 138).

In the source texts examined here, it seems in most cases that the speaker of the incantation text is clearly lacking the necessary equipment to release the baby into this world. As I have shown above, the speaker, however, knows how and from whom they can get lubrications or "the golden hatchet" to help both mother and child.

Conclusion

This paper investigates the Virgin Mary in Finnish and Karelian birth incantations. I have concentrated particularly on incantation texts in which Mary is called for help. Incantations used to alleviate the birth pains are constructed almost entirely around motifs such as naming the helpers and calling for their help, explaining the reason for calling and opening "the locks of bone". According to some texts, no human is of any help.

In the source texts examined here, the Virgin Mary is asked for help frequently. According to incantation verses, Mary is good, experienced and the "motherly one". The fact that she has also given birth is important here. She knows from experience the troubles and pains that childbirth involves. This may partly explain the important role of Mary in birth incantations. However, it should be stressed that Mary is frequently called on for help in other incantations as well (Krohn 1915, 218–22).

The calls for help include descriptions of the poor state of the woman in labour. I have shown that she is described as screaming and wailing at such volume that even the natural elements tremble. I suggest that by describing the terrible birth pains the speaker is justifying the calling of a supernatural helper. An emphasis on urgency and need can be found in my material: We need you here! Come here immediately! The calls for aid include instructions on how the helper must arrive at the bathhouse. When entering the sauna, Mary has to first of all silence the howling and creaking hinges on the door.

Mary is asked to alleviate the birth pains. She is also asked to release “the tiny-fingered one” into the world. In birth incantations, Mary is given orders to bring both lubrications from slimy fish and various weapons with which she can clear obstructions. In some incantation texts, Mary and the speaker of the text cooperate to solve the difficult situation at hand. It seems to me that the speakers of the texts cannot manage without their helpers.

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CHAPTER XIII

The Power of Words in Miracles, Visions, Incantations and Bewitchments¹

Gábor Klaniczay

In the canonisation process of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary one of her maids reported the following story when once she met “a young man by the name of Berthold, who was dressed in a worldly manner”:

Calling him to her Elizabeth said: “You seem to be living your life less discreetly than you ought to. Why do you not serve the Creator?” The youth responded: “O my lady, I beg you, pray for me, so that the Lord will give me His grace for serving Him.” And she said: “Do you really want me to pray for you?” And he said: “I most certainly do.” And she said: “It is fitting that you prepare yourself for receiving this grace by praying, while I pray for you at the same time.” Falling to her knees (as she was accustomed to doing) in an appropriate place within the monastery of Werde, where she was at the time, Elizabeth began to pray most intently for the youth. Meanwhile the youth found a place to pray some distance away in the same monastery. After both of them had persisted in their prayers for some time, the youth began to shout: “O my lady, my lady, stop praying!” But she continued with even greater zeal. After a while the youth began to call out even more loudly, saying: “O my lady, stop your praying, for I am

¹ This paper was first presented at a conference entitled *Le pouvoir des mots au Moyen Age*, organized by Nicole Bériou and Irène Rosier-Catach, in June 2009, in Lyon, and a French version will appear in the volume resulting from that conference.

growing weak.” Indeed, the youth was burning up with heat, perspiring, even steaming, as he threw his arms and his entire body about here and there as if he were demented... they found him to be hot to the touch with his clothes drenched with sweat. After repeatedly shouting, the youth finally said: “In the name of the Lord I beg you to stop praying because I am being consumed by fire.” Indeed, those who were holding him could barely stand the heat on their hands. As soon as Elizabeth stopped praying, the youth felt better. This happened a year before the death of blessed Elizabeth. Right after she died, the youth entered the Order of the Friars Minor.²

This is a charming miracle account connected to one of the major saints of the thirteenth century, where the power of words, this time the efficacy of the prayer by the saint, is expressed in a spectacular form. First we see the fashionably dressed and secular-minded young lad chastised bodily by the power of the prayer of the saint. To pray or to fast “upon somebody” for obtaining a (positive or negative) physical effect or to constrain them to obey is a well-known practice in the peasant societies of modern Central Europe (see Hampp 1961; Pócs 1984), this is a precious historical reference to such a use of prayer. The heat that was burning the young man, so that he was “perspiring, even steaming”, also recalls the fire of Purgatory (see Le Goff 1990) (he cried out: “I beg you to stop praying because I am being consumed by fire”). This might recall medieval miracle accounts where sinful persons are practically burnt to a crisp in the course of punishing actions performed by the saint or his relic.³ A second consequence of the miraculous prayer is the reformation of morals, the conversion of the young man and his later entry into the Order of the Friars Minor, which is considered by the witnesses to be the result of the miraculous intervention of the saint.

² Huyskens 1911, 53–5; I quote the English translation from Wolf 2011, 209.

³ A noteworthy example is to be found in the miracle collection of Saint Julian of Brioude, compiled by Gregory of Tours, Gregorius 1885, No. 17. 121–2; English translation in Van Dam 1993, 175–7. I have analysed in detail the problem of such “miracles of vengeance” or “miracles of punishment” in Klaniczay 1999.

Finally, one has to bear it in mind that these accounts, recorded in the protocols of medieval canonisation investigations, contain a real mixture, a cocktail of beliefs coming from lay pilgrims from neighbouring towns and villages, from the courtly milieu of princesses and maids, all under the influence of mendicant friars, filtered and refashioned by papal legates, abbots, bishops, and representatives of other ecclesiastical strata (see Vauchez 1981; Goodich 1982; Klaniczay 2004a).

When I formulated the title of this study, I had it in mind to present a general overview of the “non-ecclesiastical” (lay, “popular”) use of “efficacious words” that are told with the intention of provoking a supernatural event. In my present interrogation I rely upon two documentary corpuses with which I have been dealing for some time: the miracle collections, from two canonisation processes from Central Europe (those of St. Elizabeth of Hungary and St. Margaret of Hungary) and the documentation of Hungarian witch trials (above all the sixteenth-century Transylvanian trials). A third aspect of my reflection relies upon a longer study that I wrote a few years ago together with Ildikó Kristóf on *Holy writings and pacts with the Devil* (Klaniczay and Kristóf 2001).

Efficacious Words in Sacraments and Incantations

I will start with this last set of problems, because this will allow me to better delimit what I mean when speaking of “non-ecclesiastical” (lay, “popular”) use of “efficacious words” for communicating with the supernatural. The juxtaposition and the joint consideration of the holy and the “magical”, divine and the diabolical writings seems to me a fruitful approach in order to capture the ambivalent nature of the sacred and also the tension that characterises these two opposing poles and leads to a number of surprising analogies. The analysis of the efficacy of words in miracles and bewitchments that follows is a continuation of this interrogation.

The question of the power of words is situated within a vast ensemble of beliefs related to the sacrality of writing and the sanctity of books or the Book. The problem of religious books used as relics, or the use of the Bible as a caution for oaths, or the heretical books burnt

at ordeals by fire, the problem of the books of secrets and the books of magic inhabited by demons (discussed in the study written with Ildikó Kristóf) are not part of my present inquiry in this study. Nevertheless, their brief consideration is instructive, because they illustrate an essential demarcation, which distinguishes the functional use of sacred writings by the literate elite from the non-learned, non-ecclesiastical, lay perception of the book. This view from the outside or from below invests the written *formulae* with a supernatural status precisely because of the cultural distance that separates this public from books.

The use of sacred books in a non-literate, oral context is essential for understanding the power of words. "Oral aspects of writing" or "scripture as spoken word" (Graham 1987, 119–25), this mixture of two registers, is underlined in the Bible: "My tongue runs like the pen of an expert scribe" (Psalms 45:2). It is manifest in all aspects of liturgy, when the sacred words were deployed to have supernatural impact: when they formed part of a religious "speech act" (Tambiah 1968; Austin 1973, 1985). Here we must distinguish between a theological, ecclesiastical, literate dimension and a lay, communal, "popular" reception and appropriation. On the one hand, there is a theological, normalising discussion, which emerges in the explanation of church sacraments. On the other, this discourse interferes with two other ways to enter into contact with the supernatural: 1) prayer, i.e. the individual approach of God and the saints, and 2) the domain of "paraliturgy", benedictions, maledictions, incantations and charms.

As for the theological, ecclesiastical dimension, the problem of the sacrament of the Eucharist could furnish a good example. As shown by the analyses of the French philosopher and linguist Irène Rosier-Catach (1994, 198–208, and 2004, 74–86), it was the subject of a thorough discussion by medieval Scholastic theologians and grammarians who describe it as an "efficacious sign", which puts into effect what it signifies (*id efficit quod figurat*). This performative capacity, however, is not autonomous, but is explained by Thomas Aquinas as a dual mechanism: there is a physical causality in the sacramental formula *hoc est corpus meum*; however, this utterance does not cause the transubstantiation by itself, but with the help of divine grace, which makes it an instrument by means of which God, the agent, is acting upon man.

This universally recognised efficacy of the sacrament of the Eucharist could be contrasted with the uncertain efficacy of prayer. The

former is a word that accomplishes what it says, and the latter a word that asks for the accomplishment of what it says. With prayer one cannot constrain God (see Bériou, Berlioz and Longère, 1991; Nagy 2007).

What interests us here especially is the fact that these two degrees of efficacy, those of the church sacraments and of the individual prayer, could be confronted with a third one, that of incantations, which was for the theologians of the thirteenth century the symbolic antipode of sacramental efficacy. In incantations, according to general, “popular” perception, the words have to be fixed, as are those of the sacraments, because only this formulaic precision can guarantee their efficacy. The Scholastic discourse, however, did not recognise such efficacy: Saint Thomas Aquinas insisted that these *formulae* do not have any internal power, and if they work sometimes, it can only be because a pact has been entered with demons (see Delaurenti 2007, 239–42). This judgement might have resolved the debate from the theological point of view, but from an anthropological or historical perspective there is need to continue to reflect on the efficacy, in the eyes of those who resorted to them, of incantations and benedictions, maledictions, apotropaic charms, examined in great detail since Jakob Grimm (1835) and Adolph Franz (1909). Let me briefly refer to three synthetic discussions.

Éva Pócs has underlined that the power of words in incantations is part of a larger ensemble constituted by ritual, various procedures, gestures and also an array of objects. Still, words have a privileged role, as it is only they that can address precisely the object of the request, and it is also the words that can intensify this request by a number of linguistic tools. Éva Pócs distinguishes between syntactic tools (acknowledgement of facts, wishes, affirmation, negation, menace, command) and semantic tools (resemblance, analogy, opposition, conditions, impossibilities, absurdities). She also describes rhetorical procedures such as repetition, enumeration (in ascending and descending order), and she devotes special attention to the possible mediators to be named—forces of nature, spirits, fairies, diviners, sorcerers and saints (Pócs 1985–1986).

A more recent historical synthesis in this domain has been elaborated by Edina Bozóky, entitled *Charmes et prières apotropaïques* (2003). Her classification of the constitutive elements of incantations distin-

guishes 1) the naming of the evil or the object of the charm; 2) the conjuration (the interdiction, expulsion, protection, the assuming of identity, the command, the malediction); 3) the nomination of the helping powers (saints, magical specialists); 4) actualisation of the object by comparing it to the precedents; 5) dramatisation in terms of mythical, Biblical, hagiographical histories. She calls attention to the vocal effects in the text of incantations (rhythmical forms, rhymes, alliteration, repetition, anaphora), or the impact of the “stream of words” and the unintelligible terms (*voces magicae*) such as *abraxas* or *abracadabra*. She also pays attention to ritual uses and objectifications such as *ligaturae*, *phylacteria* and *breves* (see also Bozóky 2010, 205–75).

While the works of Éva Pócs and Edina Bozóky illustrate the mechanisms that lend a special power to the words of incantations in a lay, non-ecclesiastical context, we should be aware that these same incantations were transmitted and used in the Middle Ages by clerics. A third important recent study in this domain, the monograph by Lester K. Little on *Benedictine Maledictions* (1993) shows that medieval monasteries were home to very much the same archaic-sounding beliefs as their lay, non-ecclesiastical surroundings. More than that: they could rely upon a number of other genres, such as written oath formulae with long lists of sanctions, elaborate curses, excommunications and church benedictions. The curious medieval monastic ceremony of the liturgical humiliation of relics, analysed by Patrick Geary (1978, 1979a, 1979b) also adds a series of remarkable documents for the structural similarities (but also for a perceivable difference) of how such archaic-looking rituals, relying on the power of words, had been adapted to learned, ecclesiastical surroundings.

Vows and Healing Words

Having considered these general frameworks, let me come to the two particular themes that I promised to address in my study. With regards to the power of words in miracles, we can rely on what we observed in relation to both forms of religious utterances that we have been considering, i.e. prayer and incantation. The central speech act that puts in motion the *dynamique miraculeuse* (cf. Sigal 1985, 165–225) is the vow, “a promise made to God”, as St. Thomas Aquinas defined

it (cf. Boureau 1996), which is accompanied by a kind of prayer or supplication to the saint. At the same time, it may also incorporate a central element of charms and incantations, because it attempts to constrain the supernatural forces to resolve the problem. The means of constraint is in fact the vow itself, a promise offering to pay back the favour received from the saint by offering a gift, a service or a kind of self-sacrifice.

Like the prayer, the vow expresses confidence in the power of the saints, who are supplicated because they are deemed to be capable of resolving the problem (to obtain the mercy of God). In a supplication addressed to St. Margaret of Hungary in 1276, we hear the following:

Our Lady Virgin Margaret, we ask you by your merits, please resurrect our only child, the only consolation to our bodies and souls! We know, we know, that you are able to have mercy on us, and fulfil our wish also supported by our relatives and neighbours who are jointly asking you this.⁴

Nevertheless, there is also a sense of mistrust in the vow. The counter-gift promised in exchange for healing or other supernatural help is conditional: it is only effective if the supplication is fulfilled. Moreover, this conditional character is mutual and reciprocal. If the beneficiary of the miracle does not respect and fulfil this vow, the illness may come back and it can even become worse; the miracle will transmute into a miracle of punishment. Finally, besides the supplication and the vow, there is another verbal aspect of miracles to be considered: the healing formulae pronounced by the saints who are bringing relief by asking God for help or by praying for the miracle to happen.

In the vast field of miracle accounts three historical types have to be distinguished: 1) the long evolution of this hagiographical genre until about 1200 in autonomous *libelli miraculorum* (Delehaye 1925)

⁴ “Domina nostra, Margareta virgo, rogamus tua merita, resuscita nobis filium nostrum unicum, animarum et corporum nostrorum solatium! Scimus et scimus, quia per merita tua hanc misericordiam nobis potes patrare cognatis et vicinis hoc idem conclamantibus”, *Vita beate Margarite de Ungaria Ordinis Predicatorum*, eds. (Kornél Bőle and Kornél Szovák, in Szentpétery 1999, vol. 2, 701–2.)

and miracle narratives included in the legends of saints, i.e. before the advent of canonisation processes (Sigal 1975); 2) experience-based and notarially recorded miracle accounts in the testimonies of the canonisation processes (Vauchez 1981, 519–57; Wittmer-Butsch and Rendtel 2003; Goodich 2007) and 3) the literary-hagiographical elaborations of the later Middle Ages. Many of the late medieval legends have been compiled by exploiting the rich material of the canonisation processes, but added to them a number of literary inventions that apparently had the function of compensating for the judicial monotonousness of the witness testimonies (Goullet and Heinzelmänn 2006). To give an example, let me refer here to hagiographical inventions such as the “miracle of the roses” of Saint Elizabeth, non-existent in her canonisation process materials and surfacing in Italian and south German legends only in the last quarter of the thirteenth century (see Gecser 2005, 2009).

Pierre-André Sigal, who analysed 2,050 posthumous healing miracles, collected from 76 lives of saints and 166 miracle collections till the end of the twelfth century, observed that within this large pool vows were only mentioned 256 times (Sigal 1975, 80–3). To be more specific, we can isolate from this pool the data of the two largest miracle collections of the turn of the first millennium. From among more than 100 miracle accounts of Saint Foi (Sancta Fides) from Conques only 19 contained a vow (Robertini 1994, Sheingorn and Robert 1995), and among the 140 miracle accounts of Saint Benedict from Fleury there were only 6 accounts including vows (de Certain 1858). This absence of documentation does not mean, of course, that supplications or vows would have been absent from the dramaturgy of the miracle event. Even this modest documentation allows us to detect a persistent structure.

In any case, the situation changes in a drastic manner when formal canonisation processes become obligatory. Responding to the anxieties of Pope Innocent III on the discernment of true and false miracles, discarding all possibility of magic (see Vauchez 1999), in the famous instruction given by Pope Gregory IX to Conrad of Marburg in 1232, outlining how he had to put in writing all that the “legitimate witnesses” (*testes legitimi*) report at the hearings, there is a special clause dedicated to the problem of *ad cuius invocationem, et quibus verbis interpositis* (Auvray 1890–1955, col. 548; Wetzstein 2002, 359, 372; Wetz-

tein 2004, 538–9). The inquisitors had to record with the greatest precision the exact words with which the beneficiaries of the miracle asked to be healed: the miracle could be properly recognised only if it was the saint who was directly addressed, in the appropriate manner, and nothing resembling magic or reminiscent of incantations was said.

Studying the documents of the canonisation process of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary, an exemplary investigation carried out between 1232 and 1235 (cf. Huyskens 1908; Krafft 2004; Klaniczay 2005a), we have to recognise that the documentation of the vows escaped the attention of the scribes in the case of more than half of the miracles. Still, with this 50 percent attention we still get to know a rich variety of vows and we can perceive their formulaic structure, which we can supplement with the data of André Vauchez, who prepared an insightful analysis of a large body of comparative material from about 70 canonisation processes between 1200 and 1420, and whose results have been further refined by the case studies by Ronald Finucane (1977), Michael Goodich (1995, 2004), Christian Krötzel (1994), Didier Lett (2008) and others.

The sequence of the vow consists generally of two parts: an invocation and a promise. In the invocation the saint is addressed by his/her name, politely called also saint or blessed, or Lord or Lady, the name is frequently repeated in the same way that one finds in incantations, and the merits of the saint are often mentioned as a legitimate reason for expecting their help: *sainteté oblige*. “Most dear Lady Elizabeth, on account of the grace that the Lord did for you and the glory that you have in heaven, help me” (I/38) (Wolf 2011, 124).⁵

The promises can include the donation of an *ex voto* of candles, with all kinds of magical correspondences with the body parts of the sick people. Alongside the most frequent representation of the healed organs of the body (the head, the foot, the breast, the eye, the tongue, the ear) we find the practice of donating a candle whose size (length, weight) is defined after measuring the body of the sick child. It is also very frequent that the healed persons commit themselves (or are

⁵ The Latin original of the canonisation investigations has been published by Albert Huyskens (1908). The numbers in square brackets refer to the original numbering of miracles in the two investigations (in 1232–3 and in 1235).

committed by their relatives who implore the saint on their behalf) to becoming the servant of the saint at the sanctuary for a declared period of time or even for their entire life. With the emergence of late medieval market economy we also encounter many cases of simply donating a sum of money (see the examples in Vauchez 1981, 530–40). All in all, the principle of *do ut des* is the rule.

“Holy Lady Elizabeth, procure life for this boy and we will bring him with offerings to your sepulchre and we will oblige him to pay tribute in the amount of two *denarii* to your hospital every single year” (I/2) (Wolf 2011, 99–100). This is also an example illustrating that the vow is often made far from the relics: the thanksgiving pilgrimage is an obligatory part of the vow in such cases. “If, holy lady, you free my daughter, I will visit your tomb and bring offerings myself” (I/11) (Wolf 2011, 107). This curious bargaining does not stop here: a “crippled humpback” says in his vow: “Holy Elizabeth, I will not come to you again unless, as a result of your mercy, I can go on my own power. I will only go if the ability to do so is given to me” (I/28) (Wolf 2011, 117). The blackmailing can go even further. In the canonisation process of St. Margaret of Hungary (between 1272 and 1276) a Dominican nun, who had some doubts about the sanctity of Margaret, addresses her in the following manner: “Virgin Margaret, if you want me to believe that you are a saint, show me a miracle!”⁶

It could come also in the form of threats. When a nine-year-old humpbacked and scrofulous girl did not obtain the grace of healing despite staying ten days near the relics of Saint Elizabeth, the disappointed mother “murmured against Lady Elizabeth, saying: ‘I will discourage everyone from visiting your tomb because you have not heard me.’ She then departed in anger.” And the threat did have its effect: the miracle did come after all, very soon (I/3) (Wolf 2011, 100).

The “efficacious words” of the vow are often accompanied by a number of supplementary ritual elements that enhance the power of the words. “The mother... began to invoke Lady Elizabeth with great supplication” (I/44) (Wolf 2011, 128). The supplication could be echoed

⁶ “Virgo Margaretha, si vis quod ego credam, quod tu sis sancta, ostende mihi aliquod miraculum” (Witness 6, Fraknói 1896, 187). On the two investigations of the sanctity of Margaret, see Klaniczay 2002, 224–5, and more recently Deák 2005.

and repeated by a whole group of relatives, trembling, in tears, prostrated on the ground, circumambulating the sarcophagus, touching, caressing it, making the vows in a ritual posture “stretching herself out in the shape of a cross” (I/104) (Wolf 2011, 165). The words of the vow could be effective even without being voiced: when a Beguine gave a testimony that she had been healed while praying near the grave of Saint Margaret and she was asked how it was that nobody had heard her vow addressed to the saint, she answered “I said it in my heart.”⁷

Exchange relations, gifts and counter-gifts, pilgrimages, bargaining, blackmailing, ritual gestures, the play of the told and the untold—the power of words, as shown in miracle accounts, is complex and uncertain.

Let us consider now the other side of this communication, the power of the words uttered by the saints. The miracle accounts frequently report the following: when the supplicants were struck by misfortune, an accident or an illness, and had already lost all their hope, the saint or an intermediary came to announce to them the possibility of getting help. In one of the miracles attributed to Saint Elizabeth a hanged man heard a divine voice: “‘Trust in me: Do not remove this rope from your neck until you go to the tomb of blessed Elizabeth in Marburg.’ And with that the rope broke and he fell to the ground.” (II/18) (Wolf 2011, 181). An epileptic Cistercian monk saw three times a nightly apparition of a “certain lady” dressed in white who asked him “if he wished to be cured”, to which he responded, of course: “Most assuredly!”, and then this lady told him “If that is your wish, then vow to dedicate yourself to Lady Elizabeth of Marburg and you will be cured” (II/1) (Wolf 2011, 170).

The “efficacious word” in its true sense, the near-sacramental healing words that initiate the healing process, are also recorded in the miracle accounts. The saints bring the remedy by asking God to help or by praying for the accomplishment of the miracle. These phrases follow the model of Christ the healer. When Saint Elizabeth appears in a vision to the above-mentioned humpbacked and scrofulous girl, she tells her “Rise and walk” (*surge et ambula*) (I/3) (Wolf 2011, 100; Huyskens 1908, 160), as in Matthew 9:5, and, to be sure, she also touches the hump of the girl with her hands. To another sick girl she

⁷ “Hoc ego dixi in corde meo” (Witness 97, Fraknói 1896, 362).

offers an apple, telling her: “get up and eat” (*surge, comede*) (I/105) (Wolf 2011, 100; Huyskens 1908, xx).

In post-mortem miracles this therapeutic communication comes in dreams. Healing in dreams has a long past, including the incubation miracles, inherited from the cult of Asclepius (Isis, Serapis) in Antiquity, and much cultivated in Byzantium with the cults of SS. Cosmas and Damian, Artemios, John and Cyrus or Thecla (see Delehay 1925; Csepregi 2002). They were also taken over in the cult of saints in medieval Latin Christianity (see Klaniczay 2009). In their classical form in Byzantine Orthodox Christianity, nightly apparitions of the saints came to the beneficiaries of the miracles while they were sleeping in the narthex of the churches dedicated to these saints. Incubation miracles testified to the beliefs that those saints were really present in their sanctuaries: they were, so to say, inhabiting their shrines and could handle personally, in a bodily form, the illnesses of those who came to implore them from nearby (Bozóky 2010, 21–33). The dream-visions could, however, also become substitutes for this proximity and the saints could communicate in this form with the beneficiaries of the miracles wherever they chose to. Frequently they are described visiting the sick in their homes, consoling them, pronouncing healing formulae, touching, in dreams, the afflicted body parts, and instructing the supplicants to come to their graves in order to be fully healed. The words and gestures accompanying the healing process in the dream miracles, as we can see, recall the healing miracles of Jesus and the apostles, and the locutions that could be observed in the public actions of the great healing saints of the age, Bernard of Clairvaux or Francis of Assisi, and these scenes provide perhaps the best illustration of the power of words in miracles.

The miracle of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary and the effects of the constraining prayer that I presented at the beginning of my essay, also belong to this type. The following punishment miracle narrated about Saint Margaret of Hungary in conflict with a Dominican nun of her convent (the same whose doubts about her sanctity I have already mentioned), presents another illustration of this kind of miracle:

On one occasion, the virgin Margaret so lost herself in prayer that she twisted her shoulder in the meanwhile, which then caused her a great deal of pain. The prioress and the other sisters

were all very sorry for her, and tried to find a remedy to cure her. I, on the other hand, said to myself: Why all the fuss to find some medication for this nun? I practically jeered at her, thinking this. And then all at once I felt a prodigious pain in my shoulder, in the same place as her shoulder hurt. Without even thinking, I prostrated myself at the feet of the said virgin Margaret, and told her what I had been thinking, and what had happened to me thereupon, confessing my sin so that she might spare me; at which the virgin Margaret said: "The Lord have mercy on you," and immediately I was free of the pain.⁸

From the point of view of the power of words, we can observe two noteworthy elements in this account. One is that here we deal with the consequence of a secret mockery, untold words that still have the power to attract a punishment from the saint upon the guilty person; the other is the specific way of operation of the power of the words of the saint. The guilty nun begs her for pardon, and she puts the affair into the hands of the Lord: the power of her words consists in mediation, not in having an immediate effect.

On the other hand, if the words or invocations uttered by the saint express her own wishes, their instant fulfilment, according to the miracle descriptions, must certainly have lent them power. This was the case with the childhood miracles performed by Margaret, when she wanted to keep the mendicant friars that she liked best from travelling on from her Veszprém convent. The little princess prayed for "a great downpour" to prevent them; on another occasion, she "told God that he should break their carriage so that they should not be able to leave." Needless to say, she got what she prayed for, and the testifying

⁸ "Quodam die, dum dicta virgo Margaretha stetisset in oratione intenta, os suum spalle sue exivit de loco, ita quod magnum dolorem habebat, et priorissa et alie sorores multum dolebant et querebant medicinas, quomodo possent eam sanare, et ego testis incepti dicere inter me quodiem hoc, quod de religiosa ista habetur tanta cura pro istis medicinis, et quasi deridendo inter me hoc dicebam, et statim dolorem magnum incepti habere in spatula mea in eo loco, in quo habebat illa, et quod evenerat mihi, dicendo meam culpam, et quod parceret mihi, et statim dicta virgo Margaretha dixit: 'Dominus parcat tibi, et statim liberata fui.'" (Witness 4, Fraknói 1896, 182–3; for same story by other witnesses, see 187, 192 and 275).

nuns emphasised the point that “we believed that this had been done by her prayers.”⁹ Yet another similar miracle, exemplifying the power of the words of Margaret over the forces of nature is an incident when she makes the Danube flood when her confessor, Marcellus expresses doubts over the accuracy of her account on a previous flooding of the river. Marcellus himself tells the following story:

I’d come from Esztergom to the convent, and the blessed Margaret said to me: “We were in danger of being submerged by the Danube...; here, the water came up this high on me.” And I replied, “Oh, go on, I don’t believe it.” And then she said: “Lord Jesus Christ, show the truth to this prior who is standing here, so that he will believe what I say.” And then all at once the water started rising so swiftly that I thought it best to get away from it, and climb atop a wall... ¹⁰

These miracles illustrate the power of the words of the living saint, as represented by legend writers and witness testimonies in the canonisation processes. Let us now compare this material with some insights into the power of words in witch trials.

⁹ “duo fratres predicatorum venirent ad dictum monasterium, et vellent recedere, ista sancta Margaretha rogavit eos, ut non recederent, et ipsi stare noluerunt, sed incepterunt recedere; et tunc ista sancta Margaretha rogavit Deum, quod frangeret currum eorum, ita quod non possent recedere, et cum ipsi fratres essent in fine ville, currus eorum fractus fuit, et redierunt ad ipsum monasterium, et credidimus, quod per orationes suas hoc fuerat factum” (Fraknói 1896, 218).

¹⁰ “Veneram de Strigonio ad istud monasterium, et ista beata Margaretha dixit mihi: ‘Nos fuimus in periculo submersionis propter inundationem Danubii, si pervenissemus, ubi pervenissemus ossa mea, (?) aqua usque huc venit mihi’; certum locum demonstrando, et ego respondi: ‘Vadas, vadas hoc ego non credo’; et tunc illa dixit: “Domine Jesu Christe, ostendas veritatem istius facti priori, qui hic est, ut ipse credat verbis meis”; et cum tanta velocitate statim aqua reversa fuit, quod oportuit me ascendere, fugiendo ante aquam, super assidem positum super murum, in quo sunt columnae, quae sustinent porticum ipsius claustrum, et satis maior fuit aqua, quam prius fuerat, et usque ad matutinum aqua ita se retraxit, quod vix vestigia ipsius apparebant” (Fraknói 1896, 280-281; for other accounts of this same story, see *ibid.*, 183, 186, 191-2, 223 and 242-3).

Charms, Curses, and Evil-Chasing, Protective Words

To begin with, a brief general consideration is in order: why do I propose to compare canonisation processes with witch trials, and, more precisely, miracle descriptions with *maleficium* narratives? I have discussed the possibility and the rationale of comparing these two sets of phenomena elsewhere (Klaniczay 1990a, 1997, 2007; Klaniczay and Kristóf, 2001; see also Dinzelbacher 1995), and I would stress only two things here: the typological similarity of having, in both cases, real human beings attributed with supernatural capacities, and the analogy resulting from the fact that in both cases the evidence for these miraculous (or magical) deeds derives from narratives within the testimonies of witnesses, recorded in a judicial context (Klaniczay 2004b). That said, we should also bear it in mind that while the two canonisation processes that served as examples above took place in the thirteenth century, the upswing and the detailed documentation of witchcraft prosecutions began much later: in the early fifteenth century in certain parts of Western Europe, and only in the second half of the sixteenth century in Hungary, so the comparison, because of this time lapse, can only be very generic (Klaniczay 1990b).

The source material for my examples stems from the earliest documented series of witch trials in Hungary, in the Transylvanian city of Kolozsvár (Cluj-Napoca), where the trial documentation of 27 witches between 1565 and 1615 has been preserved. We know of 14 death sentences by burning, and there may have been more, only the sentences are not all preserved (Klaniczay 2005b). The rich documentation of these trials, preserving about two hundred testimonies of the accusers and providing colourful narratives on how the bewitchment was supposed to have taken place, has been edited by Andor Komáromy (1910, 1–74), and a new, more complete edition is being prepared by András Kiss, who recently discovered the oldest of these trials (Kiss 1997).

It is significant that the series of Kolozsvár witch trials starts with the incrimination of four women healers, three of them also acting as midwives: Clara Botzi, Prisca Kőműves, Rusa and Gertrud, who mutually accused each other of being responsible for the illnesses diagnosed as bewitchments, were ultimately all tried in court in 1565

and perished as a result of this professional rivalry. What might be of special interest from the point of view of the power of words is that we find in the bewitchment narratives of the accusers a privileged moment, a morphological unit, where—just as with the supplication and vow in the case of the miracle narratives—the powerful word, the speech-act becomes a constituent element.

This can take the form of a threat, rooted in professional rivalry: Clara Botzi regularly told her clients that “if they want their child to remain alive, they should call her, otherwise it will not live long” (Komáromy 1910, 4, similar threats, 37). We also find examples of boasting by the witch to impress the public with her magical power: “I have the power both to heal and to harm; the plants and the herbs talk to me and offer their services. They say: take me and I will tell you what you can use me for.”¹¹ There may also be a demand for the previously agreed payment. Rusa told one patient who tried to bargain over payment by saying that she was too poor: “If you do not want to pay for the job, let your hands return to their previous calamitous state.”¹²

The fatal words could be rooted in a threat or curse that emerges in the course of a conflict with the witch. Another midwife accused of witchcraft and burnt in 1584, Kató Szabó, is reported to have said after an unsuccessful attempt at bargaining in the market over some wood: “Hey you, woman, you have refused me that wood, you will regret it, you will not live more than three days,” and she indeed died three days afterwards, accusing Kató Szabó at the hour of her death (Komáromy 1910, 34). This same Kató Szabó is also reported to have frequently said: “those who call me a witch should not be redeemed by God, who should rather tear out their tongues from their mouths” (Komáromy 1910, 31). Another witch, burnt that same year, named “the mother of Mrs. Varga”, got angry with a neighbour because of a goose, and threatened him: “I will do such a thing to you because of that goose that you will regret it and weep about it all the rest of your life,” a threat that came true three days later when in a nightly apparition the witch put such pressure on the eyes of the man that he lost his sight (Komáromy 1910, 53–4).

¹¹ “Scientiam habeo sanandi vel dilacerandi...” (Komáromy 1910, 2)

¹² “No tu! si non vis mihi pro labore tot pendere, fiant manus tuae in priori calamitate.” (Komáromy 1910, 10).

There could be a special reason for such conflicts and serious threats if the alleged witch is surprised during a suspicious magical activity, and she responds with a threat. Mrs. Lakatos, another witch burnt in 1584, was seen to “collect the dew” from the pasture of the neighbour on St. George’s Day, and when asked what she was doing, she retorted: “Evil woman, you will recall this moment when you turned to me with this question.” The ensuing illness proved the power of her words and other witnesses reported several similar stories about her. Somebody threatened to throw a stone at her, and she replied “if you do that, you will never be able to throw anything with that arm and hand” (Komáromy 1910, 56–7). This kind of verbal conflict is a frequent element in the description of the nightly appearance of the witches. In a Kolozsvár trial of 1612 we read of witches coming in through the window of the victim in a group of seven, and “they strongly scolded him and threatened that they would take out the bones from his side next time” (Komáromy 1910, 78–9).

Among the kind of magical words attributed to the witches in the testimonies of the accusers, popular charms and incantations, the traditional repertoire of witches, also occur. The ample recorded source material of Hungarian witch trials, with many of the witnesses’ testimonies against more than 2,500 witches from the sixteenth to the late eighteenth century (Tóth 2000) preserved, is far from having been fully exploited from this point of view. This material could well be compared to early modern historical sources preserving the texts of incantations such as the eight “charming prayers” (*bájoló imádások*) noted down in the treatise of Péter Bornemisza, a Protestant pastor from northwestern Hungary, entitled “On diabolical temptations or the horrible hatefulness of this contaminated world” (*Ördögi kisírtetekről avagy röttenetes utálatosságáról ez megfertéztetett világnak*) published in 1578, i.e. precisely at the time of the Kolozsvár trials (Bornemisza 1955, 132–7; Takács 2003; on Hungarian archaic prayers, see Erdélyi 1999).

In the trial of Clara Botzi one of the witnesses narrates that he met her when coming home from sowing wheat, and

she sighed or rather groaned: “If you had told me before that you wanted to sow, I could have taught you words that can cause nothing else to grow on your field, just pure wheat, and that mean

that it should grow impeccably.” And she even told the witness those words but he does not remember [them].¹³

The healing woman must have also guessed that such statements carry a certain danger, so she frequently stressed that she was healing “not by devilish force but with divine word.”¹⁴

Other witches also offer their clients the teaching of incantations—let me cite a more detailed one. The “mother of Mrs. Varga”, a witch burnt in 1584, instructed one of her clients how to heal her sick child:

Stand late at night under a fruit tree and say three times: “Oh, lords and ladies, hear that! You should grant sleep to my son and render his night quiet, and I will render yours unquiet.” But by the time you have uttered this the third time, beware and stand in a place from where you can quickly run and hide under a roof, because otherwise a big calamity will fall upon you. And having done all this you should look in two directions, and if you see two candle lights, you should say: “My son should weep as soon as he knows where these candles have been lit”, and your child will be healed. (Komáromy 1910, 52–53)

With this incantation we also enter the other domain of the power of words in witch trials: the words uttered by the healers and the victims of the bewitchments in order to defend themselves from the power of the witches and compel them to withdraw. A way to do this is shouting at the witches and calling them in public by the name of witch (or rather an accumulation of insults: “boszorkány, baszó, bestye híres kurva”¹⁵). This verbal confrontation can turn into a series of commands: “Hey you witch whore, you have made my cows moo and

¹³ “suspirasset seu ingemisset dicens: ‘O—inquit—si mihi antehac significasses, quod seminare voluisti, ego te talia verba docuissem, quod in tuo tritico nihil crevisset praeter purum triticum et purum crevisset.’ Et de verbis illis nonnulla coram teste enumerasset etiam, sed testi non succurrunt” (Komáromy 1910, 2).

¹⁴ “non virtute demoniaca sed divino verbo” (Komáromy 1910, 4).

¹⁵ Meaning: “witch, fucking, beastly, ill-famed whore”—the first examples of this address are from a witch trial from the year 1568 (Komáromy 1910, 16–7).

howl enough, let them come home you witch whore” (Komáromy 1910, 62).

Some of these verbal duels, again, are infused with traditional formulae that show up in charms and incantations. One of the ways to constrain the witch is to offer them “salt and iron”. We find in one of the testimonies of the trial of Mrs. János Tóth, another witch burnt in 1584, that the victim could conjure her to appear in the place of the bewitched by saying “come on bitch, I will give you salt and iron” (Komáromy 1910, 43). Another woman at this trial describes how the witch came to her house by night, and first she addressed the hostess by saying that she could not harm her visitor for she knew her (naming and recognition as protection); then, at a renewed assault she prayed to God “and she could in no way hurt her”, and at the third assault she “scolded her very much and called her to salt” (Komáromy 1910, 36; for the use of salt in exorcism and evil-chasing rites, see Báth 2010, 236–7). Perhaps it is to prevent the power of protective words that the witches frequently take away the capacity of the victims to speak “when she appeared, I could not utter a word” (Komáromy 1910, 42), “they took my four week-old baby and put it on the table, and I wanted to cry out and raise myself but it was impossible” (ibid., 64).

Concluding Reflections

It would be too early to draw far-reaching conclusions from these brief insights into these two sets of documents, of two different, but typologically related, phenomena. The interest in examining this material lies in the discovery of a broader context for the use of the power of words in relation with supernatural agents. Both in the miracle accounts related to saints and in the *maleficium* accounts told about witches we could observe a number of original *formulae*, together with the context of their use, and a combination, a *métissage* of ecclesiastical, theological, and lay, “popular” use of the power of words in prayers, vows, blessings and benedictions on the one hand, and threats, curses, maledictions, charms and incantations on the other.

The protocols of canonisation processes and the documents of witch trials are impregnated by the influence of the ecclesiastical and judicial framework, the learned concepts of hagiography and demon-

ology. While this presence has been extensively documented in recent historiography, referred to above, the oral, ritual dimension of these experience-based accounts, and the efficacy attributed to the “non-ecclesiastical,” lay use of certain words or phrases, the various belief systems underlying what appears at first glance improvisation, remain to be systematically uncovered in the large part of the written record. I hope that I have provided some starting points for such an inquiry.

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The research of the folklore genre of charms became extremely dynamic around the turn of the millennium. A number of academic disciplines allied themselves to explore manuscripts of healing texts and other textual relics of verbal magic from antiquity and the middle ages. Studying this corpus has shed light on a number of previously unexplored aspects of Eurasian cultures. The authors of the thirteen essays in the book, covering a wide geographical and thematic range, include representatives of European ethnology and folklore studies, contemporary and historical anthropology, as well as linguistics, the study of Classical Antiquity, medieval studies, Byzantine studies, Russian and Baltic studies. The essays reflect the rich textual tradition of archives, monasteries and literary sources, as well as the texts amassed in the folklore archives or those still accessible through field work in many rural areas of Europe and known from the living practice of lay specialists of magic and healers in local communities, and even of priests.

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